African Sex Workers Alliance Strategic Plan 2017 - 2020
African Sex Workers Alliance
Strategic Plan 2017 - 2020
# Table of Contents

- Words from the Executive Director ............................................................... iii
- 1.0 Introduction .................................................................................................. 1
  - 1.1 ASWA’s Identity ......................................................................................... 5
  - ASWA’S Vision ............................................................................................... 5
  - ASWA’s Mission .............................................................................................. 5
  - ASWA’s Values ............................................................................................... 5
  - ASWA’S Theory of Change ............................................................................ 6
  - ASWA’s Strategies ......................................................................................... 6
- 2.0 Red Umbrella Strategy ................................................................................ 9
  - 2.1 Programmatic Focus .................................................................................. 9
- 3.0 Spear and Shield Strategy ........................................................................... 13
  - 3.1 Programmatic Focus .................................................................................. 13
- 4.0 Balancing the Scales Strategy ................................................................. 17
  - 4.1 Programmatic Focus .................................................................................. 17
  - 4.2 Membership Structure: ........................................................................ 18
  - 4.3 Board Structure: ..................................................................................... 18
  - 4.4 Secretariat Structure: .............................................................................. 19
- 5.0 Look and Learn Strategy ............................................................................ 21
- 6.0 Appendix I: Theory of Change Diagram ............................................. 25
- 6.1 Appendix II: ASWA’s Organogram ...................................................... 27
  - ASWA Funders .............................................................................................. 28
Words from the Executive Director

I am pleased to usher The African Sex Workers Alliance and movement into a new strategic framework. This is ASWA’s 2nd Strategic plan framework that will set the pace for a wave of revolution across the African Continent in advocacy and championing the Rights of Sex Workers.

The last 3 years we focused on nurturing our very young movement, focusing on establishing our regional offices in Nairobi, expanding our human resource capacity and strengthening the movement’s capacity through membership engagement and meaningful participation at national, regional and global levels.

This new strategic plan and framework embodies the spirit of a rapidly growing African Sex Worker Voices and their resilience and determination to break barriers around access to sexual and reproductive health rights/services, social justice and equality. In our next four (4) years, we will employ robust strategies in order to reach our very ambitious mission, vision and goals.

Our strategies: (i) Red Umbrella-will raise critical awareness across the sex workers communities and movement; (ii) Spear and Shield - will fight for the rights of sex workers advocate for the health and human rights and social justice for sex workers (iii); Balancing the Scales - we will ensure that our movement and organization exercises equality at all levels of our movement giving equal opportunity and platform to the diverse community of sex workers across Africa; and, (iv) Look and Learn - speak to all African Sex Workers to reflect and value our experiences as they inform the best practices that work best for us.

This strategic framework bears the true essence of African Sex Workers from 30 African Countries who were selfless and dedicated in the development of our own Theory of Change to better our own lives.

I look forward to an exciting 4 years of leading the African Sex Workers Movement/Alliance. I am particularly looking forward to mentoring young sex workers who will carry forward the mantle of this diverse community of Sex Workers into another era!

“Success in Life only comes when you simply refuse to give up with Goals so strong, Obstacles and Failure only act as a motivation”.

Ms Daughtie Ogutu, Executive Director, ASWA, presenting.
The African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA) is the Pan African alliance of sex worker-led organisations. ASWA was formed in 2009 with an initial membership drawn from 10 African countries. As of 2016, ASWA has members from 22 African countries. In the years since its formation, ASWA has increased in its reach, its power and its influence across Africa and around the world.

Members of ASWA’s staff, board, membership and partners reflected on the path ASWA has walked in the last eight years and shared their reasons for celebration of and pride in ASWA.

I was part of the initial group of sex workers who created ASWA in 2009 and I gave my input as an expert on sex workers organising. The roles I played and skills I gained in building a national organisation of sex workers came in very handy in building this Pan African organisation of sex workers.

I played a critical role in ensuring that Francophone sex workers were not left behind in the creation of ASWA. I had to go the extra mile to meet the leaders of sex workers organisations in Morocco, Congo, Democratic Republic of Congo, Senegal, and Togo. I am proud to now be part of an ASWA that is truly a Pan African network.

I am very proud of the role I played in building a strong and credible sex workers organisation in Togo and then connecting it to the Pan African sex workers movement. Before the first sex worker organisation in Togo, most sex workers in Togo had to align either with People Living with HIV organisations or Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Trans and Intersex organisations and there was the fear that we would create something that would not work. But we have been able to create a successful organisation. The reason that we were successful in doing it is that the people I was working with were dedicated and offered the needed technical assistance. I am very proud is that at the national level in Togo there is no decision that can be taken regarding the rights of sex workers without consulting our organisation. Through this process I have learned that there is no barrier that cannot be surmounted in struggle for sex workers rights.

My earliest memory of ASWA was informed by the history of the tensions between ASWA and the Namibian sex workers movement. Namibian sex workers wanted to have ASWA’s presence in the country, but this was not realised. However, after meeting ASWA’s leadership and beginning to work on reconciliation, I learned that fighting with each other prevents us from learning from each other. And so I have been working on building the Namibian sex workers movement and ensuring that we are involved in and can contribute to the building of a strong Pan African sex workers movement.

One year ago when I joined the ASWA secretariat, there was only one staff member who was doing all the work. Fortunately, a large number of the staff members were recruited at that time. Together, we have learned how to work together and have put in place strong systems of work – financial, human resource, programmatic and administrative – that ensure the ASWA secretariat is able to deliver on its ambitious strategic plan.

When revolutions occur, there are protests, eruptions of violence and throwing of stones. My story of ASWA includes
revolution and so there are moments of violence and deeply held pain. When ASWA moved its headquarters to Kenya, we didn’t want ASWA. However with time, we found space and energy for dialogue and through dialogue and many tears, we forgave each. My experience of ASWA and the reconciliation with the Kenyan sex workers movement taught me that whatever life you live, there are reasons that bring you where you are. Without that moment of revolution, we would have a very different ASWA. And because of today’s ASWA, we can celebrate each other and have fun as the African sex workers movement.

My story of ASWA began with singing and dancing and celebration. During the 2013 ICASA conference, I was at the ASWA booth close to the entrance of the conference and, we sang and danced at the booth throughout the conference. Sex workers across Africa were coming together and collectively struggling for our rights. And our struggle was visible.

My story with ASWA abegan at the ICASA conference. I walked into the conference to chants of “Decrim! Decrim!” I was drawn to the powerful, beautiful women who were part of the ASWA community, and I wanted to work with them. I applied for a job at the secretariat and here I am today. I am exceptionally proud that I have increased the visibility of ASWA in Southern African countries and more sex workers have joined the chants of “Decrim! Decrim!”

I knew of ASWA for many years before personally working with ASWA as their fiscal host. My work with ASWA has been a humbling and learning process as we worked to put in place the financial and operational systems. Today, I am proud to see so many people working at ASWA and to know that it has a strong secretariat that is able to deliver on its mandate. And all of this has been achieved through many conversations, moments of crying and hugging each other and navigating moments of tension and conflict in the movement. It all just makes me feel so proud being part of ASWA. This experience gives me a stronger understanding of love: we will fight, we will struggle and we will dance and through it all, we are still family.

Before ASWA existed, African sex workers had been to all these different trainings and exchange programmes, and we were clear that we wanted to build something: we were not sure what it would be or how it would look like, but we were sure that what we wanted was to build our own thing. My personal journey in the African sex workers movement has been so closely linked with the birth and development of ASWA. I have made friends and lost friends through this work. My relationship with lovers has been complicated because of my work with ASWA. I have broken and been deeply hurt by my chosen family in the sex workers movement. We have never said sorry to each other for the pain we caused each other. But that is how we love. Our love is tough, real and birthed in the trenches of struggle. But we are still here. ASWA is still here and we are celebrating the path we have walked. We have to dance – even if our dances are only protest dances – and we have to dance together.

I was pleased to be at the meeting where SWEAT was conceived and then, at a later meeting, I gave input as a sex worker expert on how ASWA should be formed. The part I played in building a national organisation for sex workers in Kenya came in very handy in building ASWA as a regional movement. My knowledge and experience in crafting programmes that respond to violence and HIV in Kenya became very useful in building a strong ASWA.
These stories highlight some of the lessons we have learned, challenges we have overcome and community we have built in the last four years. The foundational building blocks for a strong and resilient ASWA have been laid. The work ahead will therefore focus on raising the walls and building a roof over the house that is ASWA to ensure that by the end of 2020, we have a solid and resilient home from which all African sex workers organisations can find comrades, companions and comfort. Therefore, ASWA will focus on the following two areas in the next four years:

- Strengthening ASWA’s organisational and operational structure to ensure ASWA delivers on this ambitious strategic plan.
- Sharpening ASWA’s strategic activities to achieve deep and long-lasting transformations for all sex workers across Africa.
ASWA’s Identity

ASWA’S Vision

A world where sex work is recognised as a protected work in Africa, and where the health and human rights of all sex workers living and working in Africa are secured in an environment free of stigma and discrimination.

ASWA’S Mission

ASWA is the Pan-African alliance of sex worker-led groups that amplifies the voices of sex workers as well as advocates for the health and human rights of the diverse community of sex workers working and living in Africa.

ASWA’S Values

ASWA’s work is guided by these five core values:

i. We are accountable to our members and to our partners, and are always professional, committed and transparent in our work.

ii. We treat all our members equally and ensure that all our members are treated fairly and justly.

iii. We ensure that our members have voice and agency, and they are all are able to inform and guide ASWA’s activities.

iv. We respect all sex workers and understand respect as critical in building a strong and diverse community of African sex workers.

v. We are a united community of diverse sex workers living and working in Africa.

ASWA’S Theory of Change

We will realise our vision for change through the collective action of African sex workers to end the violence, stigma and discrimination we face, as well as to create a social and legal regime that protects, promotes and fulfils our rights.

To end the violence, stigma and discrimination sex workers face, ASWA will strengthen the skills and knowledge of the African sex workers movement. By strengthening the skills and knowledge of the African sex workers movement, we are equipping sex worker-led organisations with what they need to meet their communities’ needs, resist violence, discrimination and stigma, and create the change they envision.

We are also working to ensure that African sex workers are a formidable voice for change across Africa. Leadership development will be a key focus in this strategic period: building strong leadership across the African sex worker community, as well as building strong leadership within the ASWA secretariat.

Finally our work guarantees that African sex worker-led organisations are able to engage and work with ASWA towards realising our vision.

ASWA will also amplify the voice of African sex workers as we advocate for changes in social norms, laws and policies at the regional and international level. By advocating for changes in laws and policies at the regional and international levels, we are working to create a legal regime that: recognises sex work as work; repeals repressive laws, and implements laws that protect and promote the rights of sex workers.
ASWA’s Strategies

Sex work is criminalised in most African countries. In addition, sex workers face stigma, discrimination and social exclusion for doing sex work. The collusion of criminalisation, stigma and discrimination heightens social injustice and deprivation among sex workers. Sex workers experience high levels of poverty, violence and burden of disease including sexually transmitted infections such as HIV and lack of access to comprehensive health care.

In addition, the African sex worker movement is gaining traction and progressing steadily. In many African countries there are no sex-worker led organisations that are demanding for social transformation. Further, many of the sex-worker led organisations have limited skills, human resources and financial resources to support their work.

Consequently, our work seeks to create an enabling environment of partnerships that allows sex workers to address the complexities, dynamics and diversities within the sex work industry. To do this, we have three key strategies:

i. We will advocate for changes to laws and polices at the regional and international levels
ii. We will strengthen the skills and knowledge of the African sex workers movement
iii. We will build a strong and resilient organisation
iv. We will learn from our activities and adapt our work based on gained knowledge
Red Umbrella Strategy

Programmatic Focus

The objective of the ‘Red Umbrella Strategy’ is to advocate and ensure the voices of African sex workers are heard and considered in African spaces that create laws and policies. Africa has made considerable progress in addressing HIV and AIDS in the region, with notable decline in new infections in many countries. However, Africa’s response to the pandemic is still hampered by various challenges that undermine results and hinder progress towards universal access to HIV related services. Among key population groups including sex workers, the challenges are linked to the disproportionately high levels of infection and vulnerabilities to HIV. Different stakeholders at global, regional and national level are increasingly recognising these challenges, but are yet to ensure equitable, efficient and affective HIV prevention, treatment and care services for sex workers.

On-going efforts are limited by complex, social, political, legal, and economic factors. The legal, political and social climates in Africa continue to criminalise and penalise sex workers. Sex workers are discriminated and oppressed by legal frameworks that criminalise sex work. ASWA takes note of the realities of the legal, social and political environments within which sex workers live and identify at a regional level.

ASWA appreciates the fact that creating enabling and encouraging environments within which sex workers can live safely as well as access HIV services would require significant political and community leadership at global, regional, and national level to end violence against sex workers, as well as review and repeal punitive laws. ASWA also seeks to ensure that international and regional level advocacy targeting legislative bodies, policy makers and programme implementers with the objective of ensuring that the voice of African sex workers is present and heard at the following spaces:

• the various Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in Africa;
• African-wide mechanisms such as the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights; and
• global forums that discuss sex worker rights, with a specific focus on donor agencies that support sex workers.

ASWA’s advocacy work is informed by the following key principles:

• We oppose the criminalisation and legal oppression of sex work, and support its recognition as work;
• We critique the trafficking paradigm that conflates representations of sex work, and migration;
• We advocate for universal access to health services, including primary health care, HIV and sexual and reproductive health services;
• We condemn all and any violence against sex workers, including violence from police, institutions, clients, and intimate partners, while challenging the myth that sex work is inherently gender-based.
violence;

• We oppose human rights abuses, including coercive programming, mandatory testing or registration, raids and forced rehabilitation;

• We challenge stigma, and discrimination against sex workers, their families, and partners, and others involved in sex work;

• We advocate for the economic empowerment, and social inclusion of sex workers as sex workers in all spheres of life.

To realise the desired changes in legal and social regimes, our advocacy work will take place at the following levels:

• At the African regional level and at international levels with the aim to change laws, policies and institutional practices;

• We will build the capacity of national networks to participate in national advocacy processes by providing technical support, technical information, research and analysis;

• We will support national networks and their in-country partners to engage in national level advocacy;

• We will integrate advocacy in all our key programmes.

With the ‘Red Umbrella’ strategy, the outcomes we aim to realise in the four years are:

• Strengthened organisational capacity of ASWA and its members to do advocacy work

• Strengthened networks and alliances supporting sex worker rights

• Shifts in laws and policies affecting the freedom of African sex workers

• Shifts in institutional practices affecting the realities of African sex workers

To deliver on this strategy, some of the key activities ASWA will undertake are:

• Develop and implement an Advocacy strategy

• Develop and deploy an internal and external Communications strategy

• Strengthen advocacy knowledge and skills between sex worker member groups,

• Develop Policy Position papers on the various issues affecting sex workers in Africa
Spear and Shield Strategy

Programmatic Focus

The objective of ASWA’s ‘Spear and Shield’ strategy is to strengthen the skills and knowledge of the African sex workers movement. For ASWA to realise its vision for all sex workers across Africa, it is critical that African sex workers, African sex worker-led organisations, and the African sex workers movement have the skills and knowledge they need to be the designers and agents of their own change. Our skills and knowledge strengthening work is informed by the ever-changing realities of sex workers in Africa.

Strengthening the skills and knowledge of sex worker-led organisations including individual capabilities, ways of organising and working, cultural norms and physical assets are critical if an organisation is to realise its mission. Sex worker-led organisations also require specific capacities to enable them effectively manage programmes to achieve the stated goals and objectives with minimum external assistance.

The effectiveness and efficiency with which sex worker-led organisations and networks influence law makers, policy makers and programme implementers at national, regional, and international level is dependent on their capacities to engage in advocacy processes, formulating and implementing community led programmes, promotion of human rights and standing up against criminalisation. It is therefore, critical for sex worker-led organisations at national and regional levels to benefit from organisational capacity strengthening and technical support services grounded in a south to south learning approaches thus building the necessary skills and knowledge to enable organisations undertake their work effectively.

ASWA’s ‘Spear and Shield Strategy’ which focuses on capacity strengthening for ASWA and its network members will be driven by well defined objectives that state the goals capacity strengthening processes.

We will advocate for changes to laws and policies at the regional and international levels

We will strengthen the skills and knowledge of the African sex workers movement

We will build a strong and resilient organisation

We will learn from our activities and adapt our work based on gained knowledge
are to achieve, how the processes foster organisational growth, how it fits with the strategic plan, and its overall goal on achieving better programming.

The strategy will thrive in the context of well-developed partnerships that will enable sex worker-led organisations benefiting from capacity strengthening processes to own, lead, and support the processes thus ensuring sustainability of such processes. Partnerships to support capacity strengthening will include strategic partners at national, regional and global level that prioritise improvement of sex worker-led organisations capacities. ASWA will seek to create partnerships with relevant partners from government, civil society organisations, technical institutions, research organisations, communities, academia and private sector.

With the ‘Spear and Shield’ strategy, the outcomes we aim to realise in the four years are:
• Sex worker-led organisations have the skills and knowledge to be advocates for the health and human rights of all sex workers
• Sex worker-led organisations have strong internal capacities in their organisations
• A strong and diverse base of African sex worker activists
• A politically conscious movement of African sex worker activists

To deliver on this strategy, some of the activities that ASWA will undertake are:
• Strengthen the skills and knowledge of sex workers organisations to be advocates for their health and human rights through programme
• Strengthen the skills and knowledge of sex workers organisations’ to build and run organisations that can deliver on their visions and goals, with a particular focus on the leaders of the organisations
• Develop a movement building and political education programme that will build a politically conscious movement of African sex worker activists, a team of ASWA Champions.
Programmatic Focus

The objective of ASWA’s ‘Balancing the Scales’ strategy is to strengthen our organisational and operational structures to ensure that ASWA is able to deliver on this ambitious strategic plan. In the last strategic plan, ASWA registered and established its secretariat in Kenya as well as put in place its governance and management structures and policies.

It is critical to ensure that ASWA’s infrastructure and culture are crafted to ensure that the organisation is resilient, strong, creative, breathing and adaptive to the evolving context within which it works. ASWA is an Africa-wide network and thus its structure must be both wide enough to reach all the countries in Africa, as well as deep enough to ensure meaningful engagement with sex worker movements in each of these countries. This strategy will ensure the building of a deeply engaged membership, a strong leadership structure for ASWA through the general membership meetings, the board and the secretariat, and a robust communication plan that brings ASWA closer to its members.

In this strategic period, we will further strengthen our membership structure, governance structure and secretariat structure as outlined below.

Membership Structure:

• We will hold a general membership meeting every 3 years, if financially possible. This will be the space to hold board elections;

i. We will develop and deploy a membership policy and membership code of conduct.

Some of the aspects we will include in this policy are:

• We will send out a membership call every year

• Organisations can apply for membership by providing two references: one from a sex worker organisation and a second reference from a non-sex worker organisation

• The Regional Coordinator and Board representative will verify the information provided by the organisation applying for membership

• The Board will approve all new members

• A Certificate of Membership will be issued by the Regional Coordinator and co-signed by the Board Chair.

ii. We will build our membership base in Northern Africa, and other under-represented regions in Africa, paying specific-attention to provide language support

iii. We will strengthen communication with our members and share information on ASWA’s programming, advocacy goals, and governance processes.
Board Structure:

- We will ensure that ASWA’s board members are drawn from each of the five regions of Africa
- We will share information with ASWA’s membership on our board policy and board processes. These policies will include a procedure for removing non-performing board members
- The ASWA board will be made up of at least 9 people. These members will include five people who represent each of the sub-regions (Central Africa, East Africa, Northern Africa, Southern Africa, and West Africa); one person who represents French-speaking countries; one who represents Portuguese-speaking countries; and 2 co-opted members based on the board’s assessment of missing skills and expertise
- Board members will be voted in at the general membership meeting held every 3 years
- The voting for ASWA’s board members will be guided by the following:
  - All members will vote for the board members from the five sub-regions;
  - French-speaking members will vote for the representative of French-speaking countries;
  - Portuguese-speaking members will vote for the representative of Portuguese-speaking countries.

Secretariat Structure:

The Secretariat will create programmes based only on the four strategies and not based on funding-driven priorities and goals. This will ensure that ASWA is focused on the priorities of the movement and not focused on meeting donor’s needs. All projects will be categorised under the four strategic areas of focus. The organogram in the appendix is a representation the Secretariat’s structure.

- The Secretariat will strive to have Project Officers specifically focusing on each of the sub-regions, who will work with members from that region
- We will create the position of either a Co-Director or a Deputy Director for the Secretariat. A sex worker will hold this position
- We will develop our own policy documents to guide ASWA’s organisational and operational activities that are in line with our principles
- We will strengthen the Secretariat’s capacity to manage the communication with our membership to ensure that members get frequent updates about ASWA’s activities and programming through a monthly newsletter

With the ‘Balancing the Scales’ strategy, the outcomes we aim to realise in the four years are:

- A strong and resilient secretariat that has the necessary staff skills and knowledge to implement ASWA’s strategy;
- A responsive and engaged membership that is aware of and involved in ASWA’s decision-making processes, advocacy work and programming activities;
- A responsible and representative board that has the necessary skills and knowledge to provide guidance and oversight.

To deliver on this strategy, some of the activities that ASWA will undertake are:

- Strengthen our fundraising skills and knowledge to ensure that we are able to resource this ambitious strategic plan;
- Recruit new board members as described in the new board structure;
- Recruit Project Officers who are specifically focusing on each of the sub-region.
The objective of the ‘Look and Learn’ strategy is to strengthen a culture and structure of continuous learning within ASWA. For the successful implementation of this ambitious strategic plan, it is critical for ASWA to learn from its own work, gathering data and information that will inform the decisions ASWA makes with regard to its other strategic areas of work. We will do this by build and implement a robust learning, monitoring and evaluation system for ASWA’s work. Within the first year of this strategic plan, we will put in place a participatory and easy-to-use learning, monitoring and evaluation system that will allow us to continuously learn from our work and share these lessons and experiences with the world.

The ‘Look and Learn’ strategy is informed by the following feminist and social justice principles of learning, monitoring and evaluation:

i. Monitoring and evaluation are political activities and the contexts within which they are done are politicised. Therefore the personal experiences, perspectives, and characteristics evaluators bring to evaluations (and with which we interact) lead to a particular political outcome and we will ensure that the political outcome is in line with ASWA’s identity

ii. Knowledge is a powerful resource that always serves a purpose. All of ASWA’s knowledge should be a resource of and for the African sex worker community who create, hold, and share it

iii. There are multiple ways of knowing, some of which ways are privileged over others.

With the ‘Look and Learn’ strategy, the outcomes we aim to realise in the four years are:

- We will develop and implement a participatory and easy-to-use learning, monitoring and evaluation system to accompany this strategic plan
- We will build a vibrant learning culture within ASWA where we will always encourage members of ASWA’s secretariat and board to strengthen their knowledge and skills on any of ASWA’s work

To deliver on this strategy, some of the activities that ASWA will undertake are:

i. We will develop an annual work plan to strategise and plan for the coming year’s activities

ii. We will hold review moments every quarter to ensure that we are planning and tracking our activities

iii. We will hold annual review session to reflect on and learn from the work of the previous year

iv. We will hold annual team building and reflection activities, which will be organised by the Operations and Administration Officer, to make time for ASWA to reflect on and learn from the information we have gathered through our learning, monitoring and evaluation system, as well as changes in our context
and realities as African sex workers

iv. We will encourage a learning culture within ASWA by doing some of the following:
   o Creating formal learning and development plans for all members of the secretariat
   o Give recognition for new skills and knowledge gained by members of the secretariat

• We will prioritise promoting from within ASWA’s community when new posts are created within the secretariat
• We will use different technological tools such as use of Slack or Google, to formalise the process for sharing knowledge and information gained by members of the secretariat and the broader ASWA community
### Appendix I: Theory of Change Diagram

<table>
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<tr>
<th>PROBLEMS</th>
<th>OPPORTUNITIES</th>
<th>STRATEGIES</th>
<th>OUTCOMES</th>
<th>IMPACTS</th>
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</table>
| • Existence of bad laws or absence of laws related to sex work and sex workers  
• African sex workers experience lack of skills to properly engage in and address their own needs  
• Weakness of African sex workers movement in Africa | • Support and mentorships to organisations and individuals  
• Exchange visits with peer organisations  
• Engagement in dialogue with the community  
• Curriculum and guidelines creation by national organisations  
• Knowledge generated to inform the tactics and strategies of the African sex workers movement  
• Convenings such as ICASA and CFCS  
• Strengthened advocacy for sex workers rights at continental and international levels | • Advocating at regional and international levels for changes to laws and policies  
• Strengthen the skills and knowledge of the African sex worker movement  
• Building a strong and resilient organisation  
• Developing a robust monitoring, evaluation and learning system | • Strengthened capacity to do advocacy work  
• Strengthened networks and alliances  
• Shifts in laws and policies  
• Shifts in institutional practices  
• Organisations have skills and knowledge  
• Organisations have strong internal capacities  
• Strong and diverse base of African sex worker activists  
• Politically conscious movement of African sex worker activists  
• A strong and resilient secretariat  
• A responsive and engaged membership activities;  
• A responsible and representative board  
• A participatory and easy-to-use learning, monitoring and evaluation system  
• A vibrant learning culture within ASWA | • Better laws and policies are set and applied for sex workers and sex work  
• The skills and knowledge of African sex workers organisations are strengthened to enable them to respond their needs  
• African sex workers’ face, voice and force at the continental and international level are amplified and visible  
• African sex workers organisations are able to engage with and work with ASWA |
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