



Global Network of Sex Work Projects
Promoting Health and Human Rights

Sex Worker Academy Africa (SWAA)

case **STUDY**



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Introduction

The Sex Worker Academy Africa is a ground-breaking learning programme for community empowerment and capacity building, led by and for sex workers. It delivers an effective blend of knowledge and experience. The Academy is presented over the course of a week, and includes workshops, site visits and art advocacy sessions. The Academy brings together national teams of sex workers from across Africa to develop organising skills, learn best practices, stimulate national sex worker movements, and strengthen the regional network. The Academy is an African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA) initiative implemented by Kenya Sex Workers Alliance (KESWA) in Nairobi, Kenya. The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) supported the concept of South-South learning and capacity building.

Sex worker-led organisations are critical in understanding and addressing the needs and realities of sex worker communities. Sex worker collectives can inform the design and implementation of effective and appropriate programmes for HIV/AIDS prevention, treatment, care and support. Community engagement and leadership can strengthen discussions around controversial issues and help promote a greater understanding of HIV among political and social leaders. A dynamic group of sex workers who are trained to drive community mobilisation at numerous levels, from grassroots response to national, regional, and global levels, is critical to protecting the health and human rights of sex workers and ending the AIDS epidemic.

However, many sex workers and sex workers' rights organisations work in isolation and are not tied to the broader sex workers' rights movement. In some countries there are no organisations which are sex worker-led. Policies and programmes are implemented without consulting the sex working community, which means they are ineffective and often harmful.

History

The Sex Worker Freedom Festival brought a number of African sex workers to India, to participate in the International AIDS Conference 2012 Hub at Kolkata, facilitated by NSWP. After taking part in the hub, four country teams from Botswana, Kenya, Uganda, and Zimbabwe visited VAMP in Sangli and Ashodaya Samithi in Mysore – two Indian sex worker collectives. During the visit, teams learned about the growth of interventions through rights-based, community-led processes, and the development of the sex workers' rights movement in India.

“It was an eye-opener. I saw it and saw a growth in me. Sex workers must take leadership, maybe they will employ doctors, but sex workers will be in charge and oversee everything.”

Phelister Abdalla, KESWA Country Coordinator

Members from the country teams reported back to ASWA and NSWP about what they learned and the need to sustain continued learning and exchange. This visit inspired the idea of having an African Academy, which would serve as a training ground for African sex workers.

The Academy was developed in a partnership between sex worker-led organisations from Africa and Asia Pacific, facilitated by APNSW, ASWA and NSWP. ASWA decided that an Academy led by trained sex workers, under the mentorship of Ashodaya Academy and VAMP Institute, would be set up. The Kenyan Sex Workers Alliance (KESWA), VAMP, and Ashodaya worked together to develop a curriculum and a skill-building process that is culturally appropriate and designed for the African context. The Academy would lead the process of building capacity, creating dialogue, and strengthening the sex workers' rights movement in Africa.



Goal

The goal of the Academy is to strengthen sex worker-led organisations and communities across Africa, building capacity on local, national and regional levels.

Strategies

The Academy provides sex workers with tools to advocate for and ensure that HIV and sex work-related policies, and HIV and STI prevention, treatment, care and support programming are rights-based, and designed and implemented with the meaningful participation of sex workers. At the Academy, participants acquire the skills and knowledge to influence both policy and service delivery.

These goals are met through developing the capacity of Academy faculty members, developing demonstration sites, creating a curriculum that combines learning and practical experiences, and growing the pool of country teams of Academy graduates from across Africa, who have acquired the skills to build national sex workers' rights movements and built relationships for creating cohesion within national movements.

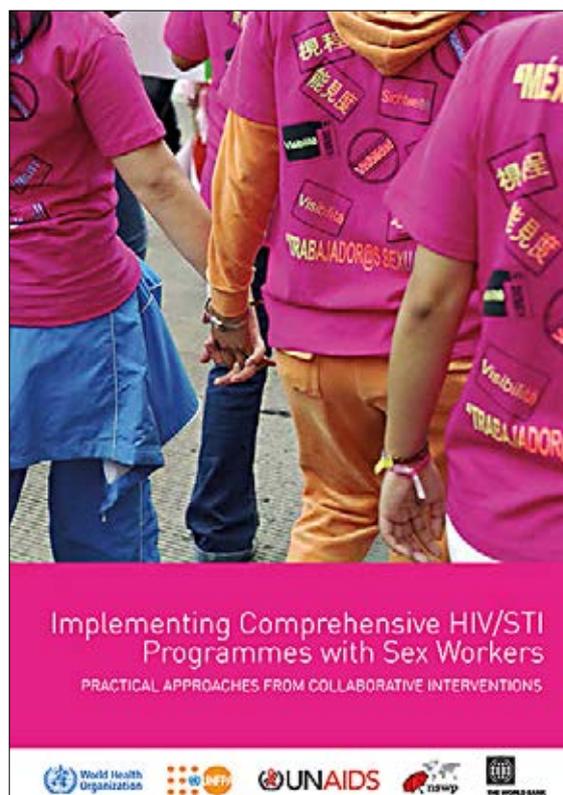
“Previous programmes for capacity building weren’t peer to peer – which is the uniqueness of the Academy. It is focused on the community.”

Daughtie Ogotu, ASWA Regional Coordinator

Development of the Curriculum

In 2012, WHO in partnership with the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP), UNFPA and UNAIDS developed recommendations for prevention and treatment of HIV and STI amongst sex workers in low and middle-income countries. This led to the development of *Implementing Comprehensive HIV/STI Programmes with Sex Workers: Practical Approaches from Collaborative Interventions*, also known as the *Sex Worker Implementation Tool (SWIT)*, which recommends practical approaches based on global practices.

The SWIT emphasises that intervention packages must be based on community empowerment strategies. The SWIT



THANKS TO PJ STARR WHO SUPPLIED THE IMAGE FEATURED ON THE COVER OF THIS DOCUMENT.

SEX WORKER ACADEMY AFRICA (SWAA)

recommendations require meaningful sex worker participation in all aspects of planning, implementation and monitoring and evaluation. It is informed by sex worker experiences and preferences, research, and evidence, and represents consensus between sex worker networks, UN agencies, civil society and donors.

The SWIT is the foundation for the Academy curriculum. The elements of the SWIT are illustrated throughout the curriculum with case studies. The initial case studies came from VAMP in Sangli, India and Ashodaya Samithi in Mysore, India and are being replaced with African case studies, to illustrate how the recommendations can be implemented in an African context.

The curriculum covers the key elements of the SWIT, adapted for the learning style of the Academy:

- **Community Empowerment**
- **Addressing Violence against Sex Workers**
- **Community-led Services**
- **Condom and Lubricant Programming**
- **Clinical and Support Services**
- **Programme Management and Organisational Capacity-Building**



Learning Style

The learning style of the Academy is participatory and developed for the African context. There is minimal lecturing, and a strong focus on interactive learning and team-building. The Academy makes use of many activities and learning methods that encourage energetic engagement, practicing new skills, and building relationships.

These include:

- **Icebreaker activities to build a sense of community and encourage engagement.** For example, 'Sexy Susan'. Participants stand in a circle. Moving around the circle, the first person introduces themselves with an adjective that begins with the same letter as their first name. Each successive person does the same, and also repeats the previous person's introduction. This activity is fun and helps participants remember each other's names. It ensures that participants who may be quiet or shy have an opportunity to participate.
- **Energisers and appreciations.** For example, after a facilitator has completed their presentations for the day, the group sings a short song to appreciate their hard work.
- **Refresher activities to help recall and reinforce lessons from the previous day.** For example, the facilitator tosses a ball to participants. As each participant catches the ball, they share one thing that they learned the previous day.

- **Activities to illustrate concepts.** For example, the Power Walk. Participants stand in a line at the back of the room. The facilitator describes a life circumstance or experience, and asks participants who fit that description to step forward or backward, depending on whether or not the circumstance described is an advantage or disadvantage in life. This exercise is used to demonstrate the different levels of power and privilege that exist within our communities, even among other sex workers.
- **Group flip-charting and presentation.** For example, after being introduced to a concept, each country team gathers to discuss the concept as a group. They write notes on a flip chart and when they are finished, share their ideas with the other country teams and faculty by doing a short presentation. This promotes team work and practicing public-speaking skills.
- **Group debates to increase participants understanding of positions on issues and arguments that participants might encounter in their advocacy.** For example, participants are split into two groups to engage in a parliamentary role play debate on the statement, 'It has been proposed that sex workers should not be criminalised. They should be protected from violence. However agents, brothel owners and managers are major culprits in the trafficking of women and children and should be criminalised.' One group makes arguments in favour of criminalising third parties, while the other group argues for full decriminalisation. After the debate, facilitators provided additional information about the evidence supporting decriminalisation and the harms of third party criminalisation.





- **Videos and documentaries.** For example, participants watch a documentary about community empowerment, produced by VAMP, showing a piece of performance art advocacy and its effectiveness of engaging the attention of the public, and video of dance advocacy performances from previous Academies.
- **Sharing individual stories to provide real life examples of how Academy concepts can be implemented practically.** For example, a faculty member shared a story of working as a paralegal. Two sex workers were arrested and called her for help. Using her paralegal training, she was able to get them released with no charges.
- **Art and dance advocacy projects.** Each country team works on advocacy projects. For example, this includes performance advocacy that incorporate song, dance and theatre, to tell a story or convey a message. Participants create and then practice these performances over several days. Country teams also create large paintings that use imagery and words to convey their advocacy message. Some participants from each country create and perform a dance for the Academy graduation.
- **Site visits.** For example, participants spend an afternoon touring each demonstration site, seeing first-hand how the facilities are set up, interacting with the staff at the demonstration sites, and learning about how the demonstration site has been developed and how it is run.
- **Feedback sessions.** At the end of each day, the faculty and a representative from each country team gathers to discuss any feedback, concerns or issues with how the activities and learning went. This daily feedback mechanism allows the Academy faculty to make adjustments to the activities and teaching methods and provide continuous learning and development as the Academy progresses. This helps ensure that participants are able to get the most benefit out of each session.

Format of the Academy

The Academy is a week-long programme. The days include workshops, site visits and art advocacy projects. Most days runs from 9:00 to 18:30 with breaks for snacks and lunch. Accommodation and meals are provided to participants.

Day one of the Academy begins with a welcome dinner and focuses on introducing the organisers, faculty and participants, and the format of the Academy. The participants collectively develop a set of rules and guidelines for the space, and share their hopes, fears and country experiences. Introducing their country experiences creates a context for experiences and issues that they will share with the group throughout the Academy. Each country team selects a representative to provide feedback to the faculty at the end of each day.

Day two provides a history of the Academy and introduces the organisations involved, the objectives and the methodology of the Academy. Core concepts are introduced, such as what sex work means, policies and positions on sex work, and what rights and empowerment mean for sex workers. Participants are introduced to NSWP's *Consensus Statement on Sex Work, Human Rights and the Law*. Funding sources and challenges, including the 'anti-prostitution pledge' are addressed.



Day three introduces the concept of community empowerment, including what it means, why it is important and what the indicators are of an empowered sex worker community. '100% condom use programmes' are explained and discussed. Art and dance advocacy is introduced through a variety of different media, as an effective method of sharing your message in places where protest may be illegal. The participants visit the first demonstration site, Health Options for Young Men on HIV and AIDS and STIs (HOYMAS).



Day four introduces community-led services, including outreach, condom programming, and developing drop-in centres. Participants learn the core values that inform effective outreach, and discuss how outreach is being done in their communities. Information and beliefs about condoms are discussed in a group activity. 'Colour theory' is introduced and country groups begin creating their paintings, selecting background colours to support their message.

Day five covers community-led clinical services compared to government-run services or providing referrals to other clinical services. The demonstration site visit to HOYMAS is discussed in this context. Participants share information about, and rate, clinical services in their communities, discuss how to do effective referrals, and learn about community-led clinic management committees. Participants visit the second demonstration site, Bar Hostess Empowerment & Support Programme. Country teams continue to refine their art advocacy message, and rehearse their performance art advocacy pieces.

Day six addresses the forms and context of violence. Many participants share personal experiences with violence and its impact on their lives. The ongoing activities for community building and creating relationships are essential for creating a safe and welcoming environment for participants

to share deeply personal stories about traumatic experiences. Country groups discuss steps for good practice in immediate, medium and long-term responses to violence. The afternoon ends with continued work on the dance and art advocacy projects.

Day seven sees participants working on an advocacy plan for their country, and discussing how they will implement the skills and knowledge that they have gained at the Academy when they return home. They continue working on their art advocacy projects, and complete an evaluation.

Later in the evening, participants return for the graduation ceremony. Members of the SWAA Advisory Group, demonstration site leaders, faculty members and organisers are present for the graduation. Each country group presents their dance and art advocacy projects, and participants are presented with a certificate, red scarf and red umbrella for graduating from the Academy. The graduation ceremony is a vibrant celebration of the hard work, and community and skills-building that has taken place over the week. After the graduation ceremony, a dinner and party are held at the restaurant adjoining the hotel where the Academy takes place.

Each evening during the Academy, the faculty gather to practice their presentations, review the curriculum and incorporate feedback.



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Faculty

The Academy faculty is made up of sex workers from across Kenya. The Sex Worker Academy Africa (SWAA) Advisory Group conducted an extensive search and selection process to recruit the initial group of six faculty members. Social media and email were used to announce the opportunity across KESWA members (74 sex worker organisations) and a detailed Terms of Reference was circulated.

The initial team of faculty members visited VAMP Institute and Ashodaya Academy in India for training. A semi-structured course was conducted at both locations, using teaching sessions and exposure to the organisations' programmes for HIV prevention, treatment, care and support, and crisis prevention and mitigation strategies. VAMP and Ashodaya sex worker leaders shared their experiences with creating collectives, strengthening skills in programme management and implementation, and institution-building.

This initial on-site training provided core skills for faculty members and enabled them to identify priority areas for developing the Academy in Kenya. This visit exposed the sex worker faculty members to a rights-based approach to sex worker advocacy and sex worker led programming in different communities.

All of the faculty members were new to facilitation before joining the Academy team, and were drawn from grassroots activists and sex worker-led and community-based organisations.

Sustainability

The Academy is structured to be sustainable over time. Every Academy includes a Kenyan team to ensure that there is a growing pool of trained Kenyan sex workers from which new faculty members can be recruited.

Eighteen Kenyans participated in the first two Academies. Of these graduates, three were selected to shadow the existing faculty during the third Academy in 2014 to learn facilitation skills. The new faculty members were introduced as facilitators during the first Academy in 2015.

The Academy ran four times in 2015. Up to three faculty members stepped down each year, and three Kenyans from the graduates were invited to join the faculty the following year.

Kenyan graduates train one another as faculty members. Using this peer-based, in-country training method provides a less costly and more sustainable method of maintaining and growing the team.

Follow-Up and Support

ASWA's SWAA Programme Officer will provide in-country follow-up, to help build national movements. The Programme Officer will work closely with graduates, going in countries to focus on helping them to develop a national plan both during the Academies and in follow-up country visits.

The Programme Officer will also be responsible for linking participants of the Academy, developing a communication plan to connect countries that have participated in previous Academies, so that they may continue learning and knowledge-sharing.

Partnerships

The Academy is the product of many partnerships, between regional networks, national networks and organisations, local sex worker-led groups, and allied organisations, facilitated by NSWP.

“Sex workers are capable, can make a difference in this work. The Academy is one of the ways to show people that the community is trustworthy. Once trained and given capacity, they will never let you down. They will work to show the fruits of their work.”

Phelister Abdalla, KESWA Country Coordinator



Governance

The Academy is an ASWA initiative implemented by KESWA.

ASWA is responsible for identifying the countries to attend the Academy. ASWA supports in-country organisations and national networks in selecting the individuals to attend the Academy. The Academy develops partnerships with one or more organisations in each of the countries that sends a team.

KESWA is responsible for the implementation, management and day-to-day operations of the Academy.

An Advisory Group of six members, three from KESWA, and three from ASWA, is responsible for agreeing the mandate, vision, objectives and activities of the Academy.

KESWA provides regular updates to NSWP to ensure appropriate curriculum development and delivery against the objectives.

Demonstration Sites

An ideal learning programme includes a space where a hands-on transfer of skills is possible. This gives the participants a practical sense of how to approach things. Two demonstration sites in Nairobi, Kenya were selected to be part of the Academy.

- 1 Health Options for Young Men on HIV and AIDS and STIs (HOYMAS)** is a community-based, sex worker-led organisation that serves male sex workers and men who have sex with men living with HIV and AIDS. They provide clinical, outreach and support services.
- 2 Bar Hostess Empowerment & Support Programme (BHESP)** runs a wellness centre, located near many sex work hot spots. They provide peer-education, clinical and legal services to female and male sex workers.

Ashodaya Academy worked with BHESP and HOYMAS to determine the specific areas of practice that could be demonstrated for the Academy, as practical examples to be adapted for participants' local environments.

At BHESP, the paralegal system, the drop-in centre and a home-based sex work setting was identified. Peer educators and the paralegals participated in developing the ways to showcase their work to visitors. At HOYMAS, the good rapport they had built with government healthcare providers, their home-based care for sex workers living with HIV, and outreach in bars was prepared for the same purpose.

Funding

Initial funding for the development of the Academy was provided by UNFPA and Bridging the Gaps, including creating the infrastructure and curriculum. Bridging the Gaps and the Robert Carr civil society Networks Fund provided funding for the on-going implementation of the Academy.

Performance Measures

As of August 2015, the Academy has run six times, with 118 participants from the following countries:

- 1** May 2014: Kenya
- 2** September 2014: Tanzania, Zimbabwe, Kenya
- 3** November 2014: Nigeria, Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya
- 4** May 2015¹: Malawi, Uganda, Kenya
- 5** July 2015: Burundi, South Africa, Kenya
- 6** September 2015: Namibia, Rwanda, Kenya
- 7** October 2015: South Sudan, Mauritius, Kenya

Fourteen organisations in participating countries partnered with ASWA to nominate country teams.

¹ Initially the team from Burundi, a Francophone country, was invited to attend the fourth Academy. However, due to travel barriers that could not be resolved in time, the team from Uganda was invited in their place. The Burundi team was invited to attend the next Academy.



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Every sex worker who has attended the Academy has completed the course, for an impressive 100% graduation rate.

ASWA currently estimates that 50–60% of Academy graduates are using the skills and knowledge they acquired to strengthen sex worker-led organisations and communities across Africa, and build capacity on local, national and regional levels.

Three Academy participants from Kenya have been successfully trained and are part of the faculty team. An additional three Kenyan participants from 2015 have been selected for faculty training in 2016.

ASWA has recruited a SWAA Programme Officer to provide technical support through in-country visits. The Programme Officer will follow-up, to help build national movements, working closely with Academy participants. Four visits have been completed, to Zimbabwe, Malawi, Tanzania, Burundi, additional four country visits are scheduled for 2015 to South Africa, Rwanda, Nigeria and Democratic Republic of Congo; making a total of eight country visits scheduled for 2015.

Analysis

Participants

The first Academy was run for Kenyan participants, to build national capacity and sustainability, and provide facilitators with an opportunity to gain experience of facilitating in a Kenyan context.

The second Academy invited country teams from other English-speaking countries.

The third Academy invited Francophone countries to nominate country teams. Non-English speaking participants are provided with whisper-interpreting.

ASWA sends out a call across the network for nominations of country teams of six sex workers to attend. The Advisory Group reviews the applications, to ensure that female, male and transgender sex workers are represented, including sex workers living with HIV. Countries are selected to ensure regional representation and will include one non-Anglophone country in each Academy.



Implementing Skills and Knowledge

After attending the Academy, many participants have gone back to their home countries and begun implementing the skills and best practices they learned.

ZIMBABWE

Prior to the Academy, Zimbabwe did not have a sex workers' rights movement. On returning home, the team from Zimbabwe started a national sex worker movement, called Pow Wow. Pow Wow is a sex worker-led collective formed to empower sex workers in realising their human and health rights and to be a vehicle for the collective voice of Zimbabwe sex workers.

Pow Wow's leadership is made up of both female and male sex workers, and the movement is inclusive of all genders.

Pow Wow was started by five sex workers who graduated from the Academy in September 2014, and four of the original group are still involved. This group has been instrumental in initiating the creation of a sex workers' rights movement in Zimbabwe. The country team has been sharing the skills and knowledge acquired at the Academy with other sex workers who have joined the movement, which currently includes 18 individuals.

Pow Wow has built a partnership with the Sexual Rights Centre, (a local organisation that provides for health and rights interventions for sex workers in Zimbabwe) to provide support for their activities and a safe place to meet. Pow Wow is in the process of creating a national presence and doing outreach via social media to recruit more sex workers to the movement. They have applied for a grant from the Red Umbrella Project, and if they receive funding, plan to engage in national capacity building activities, bringing together sex workers from across the country to share skills and knowledge from the Academy.

MALAWI

The Malawi country team has created the Malawi Sex Workers Alliance (MASWA), which includes female, male and transgender sex workers. While the idea for the Alliance predated attendance at the Academy, the

energy and skills learned at the Academy were important in enabling Malawi sex workers to move forward and create the organisation. The core organising group of MASWA is the Academy country team.

“We have already started. We had a fruitful meeting last week. Thanks to the Academy, it has really empowered us. It gave us a lot of platforms and opportunities.”

Participant, Malawi country team

After the Academy, the country team went back and had a meeting with Director of the National AIDS Commission to discuss the inclusion of sex workers, and they have been able to develop a positive relationship and on-going dialogue with the director.

MSWA has formed a partnership with the Malawi Network of Religious Leaders Living or Personally Affected by HIV and AIDS (MANERELA+). MANERELA+ has provided MASWA with a safe place to meet, and together have formed a team that visit different regions in Malawi to provide sensitisation and map the organisations that work with sex workers. Via MANERELA+, MASWA has access to fund from the AIDS Rights Alliance of Southern Africa (ARASA), a sex worker-friendly donor, which will help sustain their activities through December 2015, which include reaching out to other groups to join, mobilising sex workers, and sensitising.

There is a growing media interest in sex workers, and sex workers from MASWA have participated in interviews about their work and the needs of key populations. Media coverage has overall been positive.

Prior to the Academy, female, male and transgender sex workers did not organise together. The learning and team building at the Academy enabled the country team to recognise that sex workers of all genders face similar challenges, and the benefits of being united and having common voice.



TANZANIA

The country team from Tanzania are the core organising group which formed the Tanzania Sex Workers Alliance (TASWA). TASWA developed a partnership with Community Health Education Services and Advocacy (CHESA), which provides a safe space for meetings. They are in the process of building partnerships with other communities of key populations and have successfully reached out to sex worker-led organisations in Dodoma, Tanzania's capital city. TASWA has focused their efforts within Dodoma, but plan to make contacts in other cities to expand to be a national network.

TASWA has engaged in mobilisation of sex workers, outreach, and awareness-raising, by various means including social media. Their outreach work has resulted in Ministries of Health and Social Welfare requesting their input issues affecting sex workers.

After returning from the Academy, they conducted a successful sensitisation campaign with police in Dodoma, establishing a positive relationship. They are able to directly approach commanding officers to discuss issues and help sex workers who get into trouble.

“In my own opinion, the Academy is transforming lives. As a pan-Africa platform resource, the Academy is creating change agents and send them back to their countries to influence change in regard to health and rights of sex workers.”

SWAA Programme Officer, ASWA

In addition to the four countries visited by the Programme Officer, participants from other countries are benefitting from the skills and knowledge gained at the Academy.

Graduates from the Democratic Republic of Congo started a female sex worker organisation: UMANDE.

Country teams in Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zimbabwe and Nigeria have reported some form of engagement with their national governments and stakeholders to lobby and advocate for the health and rights of sex workers.

“I learned a lot from the Academy but I mostly gained from the different ways of advocating for sex workers' rights. And because of that session we have improved our advocacy strategies in Uganda, where we have now reached a level of involving religious leaders, media and academia.”

Batte Shamilah, Uganda country team

“I can say I learned a lot. The most important thing I came to learn is that sex work is work, like any other work. I also learned that I have my rights as a sex worker just like the rest of Kenyan citizens, pertaining to the Kenyan constitution.

I have been able to pass a lot of information to my fellow sex workers. During our bi-monthly meetings I use knowledge that I learned at the Academy. Being a community-based organisation for people living with HIV, I share lots of knowledge.

I learned about community empowerment. I am now capable of following up on cases of violence. I also appreciate art advocacy; I understood that I can pass a lot of information through it.

I have also personally benefited in my life, healing my heart and brain when I disclosed my HIV status. I felt relieved and I thank SWAA for letting me meet more HIV positive sex workers like me. I felt that I was not alone.”

Kennedy Mwendwa, Health Officer at the HIV/AIDS ALLIANCE OF KENYA (HAPA-Kenya), Mombasa, Kenya country team

Participants in the Academy develop strong country teams, and learn essential skills to establish and grow organisations that can function effectively and independently. Participants also form strong relationships which contribute to the development of a pan-African network of sex workers.



“Investing in community works. When asking for capacity people didn’t trust community. The Academy tells people that the community can do it well. People do not go back to their countries the same.”

Phelister Abdalla, KESWA Country Coordinator

Future of the Academy

If funding continues, the goal is to grow the faculty to nine people. The faculty will be divided into groups of six to facilitate the Academies. If additional funding can be obtained, the faculty will be expanded and the Academy will be scaled up to run once a month.

ASWA, through the SWAA Programme Officer, will continue to provide technical support through in-country visits and on-going communication with the country teams.

The Academy may be used as a framework for sex worker communities to run national capacity building programmes.

The African movement will depend on the Academy as an essential capacity building resource, which enables African sex workers to have ownership of the process.

Conclusion

The Academy has been successful in meeting its goals. There is a notable increase in capacity of sex worker-led organisations and the sex workers’ rights movement in countries that have participated in the Academy. Graduates are using the skills and knowledge they gained to work towards meaningful includes of sex workers in policies and programmes that impact them.

“There is a visible increase in community empowerment since the Academy.”

SWAA Programme Officer, ASWA





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