

SWAN strategy 2014-2017*

Mission, vision and values

Uniting sex worker advocates to create societies in Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia where

- sex work is depenalized and decriminalized,
- sex workers can live and work free from violence, stigma and discrimination,
- sex workers are empowered and actively engaged in issues that directly affect their lives and health.

Values:

- We recognize the right of sex workers to take agency in their lives, health and decisionmaking
- We commit to actively involve sex workers in all levels of SWAN governance and to the protection of human rights operations
- We recognize sex work as work, which is an unforced sale of sexual services between consenting adult women, men and transgender individuals.

Goal:

To strengthen advocacy by civil society including groups of sex workers, for a safer legal environment that ensures human rights of sex workers in Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

Objectives:

- 1. Create and sustain a platform of CEECA country advocates for monitoring, analyzing and improving the legal environment around sex work, including exchange of tools and advocacy experiences.**

Rationale for the approach:

Currently there is no clear understanding of what a good legal framework would look like for sex worker rights amongst SWAN members. At the same time, there is little understanding of what legal frameworks actually exist in CEECA countries. Given this situation, little work to date has been done on creating more enabling legal environments.

SWAN members will move to be engaged in understanding better and reporting on legal frameworks over the next 3 years, with SWAN using this engagement to inform regional and global conversations. SWAN will not directly advocate at national level, but rather assist those working nationally on legal analysis. Documentation of violence experienced by sex workers (which highlights the need for legal and law enforcement reform) should be further encouraged

* Assessment and strategy development process was undertaken and directed by SWAN's Steering Committee and Secretariat from February through June 2014. SWAN's Steering Committee approved the strategy at the end of June 2014.

among SWAN members. These efforts need to move beyond documentation to understanding better what legal changes groups want to start demanding.

Sample activities:

- Organize a SWAN **member working group** on reforming the legal environment, reducing violence and working effectively with police. The working group contributes to work outlined below. The group's terms of reference will be defined by the Steering Committee in consultation with membership and staff.
- Create **position papers** and frequently asked questions on legal framework approaches, including decriminalization and the Swedish model, HIV related health and rights, and sex work vs. trafficking. This work will start with reviewing what is already available globally, including from organizations such as NSWP. The efforts will need to be tailored to regional specifics and will require translation into multiple languages and active promotion regionally.
- **Raise the level of discussion and exchange** within SWAN membership on these issues through convening the working group and other members around events already planned (EECAAC, Regional Harm Reduction and Drug User Forums, ICRSE Boot Camp)
 - Mapping regional, sub-regional and European events on sex work, HIV, women's rights, harm reduction and others to identify meeting opportunities.
 - One event organized as capacity building on issues around decriminalization and other legal frameworks, including how to analyse the framework and advocate.
 - One event organized on work with police around reducing violence.
- **Monitor** changes in, discussions and advocacy efforts around legal framework on sex work within the region, at the EU and CIS levels. Issue factsheets on biannual basis on legal environments in the region and the effects of the laws on sex workers.
- Create fact sheet explaining how to use documentation methodology for advocacy and collect other **tools for members** on the legal environment and advocacy.
- Strengthen **SWAN website, twitter and Facebook** and other social media means for creating a repository of information from members and partners, for experience sharing, and storage for key regional data.

2. Improve sex worker capacities to engage in advocacy.

Rationale:

SWAN prioritizes support for sex worker groups and their leaders to build leadership skills, and to articulate legal frameworks that would work for them and their rights in their countries.

Sex worker activism development is a long-term process that is most effectively done nationally - therefore SWAN membership has a crucial role to play in supporting sex worker communities in identifying leaders, entrusting them with responsibilities, and providing support mechanisms to grow potential.

Sample activities:

- Together with EHRN and other networks, produce and promote a fact sheet on how a sex worker can become a **CCM member** and actively engage in governance for rights' protection.
- **Supporting sex workers to attend** regional/global meetings including arranging funding from donors, as well as assistance in writing abstracts and scholarship applications and preparing presentations.
- Create **mentorship program**, including a concept paper defining the program developed in collaboration with the SC and members. The program will be supported by a mentorship coordinator. Program should include use of online tools and face-to-face meetings, to supplement the one on one work. Topics should include building understanding of legal frameworks around sex work and their impact on sex workers, organizational development based on needs assessment, linking with sex worker activists from other countries, drafting conference submissions and presenting, communicating with media and others. The Mentorship program will need to create useful opportunities for exchange between Russian and English SWAN member speakers.
- Strongly encourage **SWAN member organizations** to nominate and propose sex workers for leadership roles, including inside their own organizations and meeting representation. SWAN members should be encouraged to share these learnings.

Work to ensure that at least **50% of Steering Committee** are sex workers. New sex workers who have not yet been in the Steering Committee should be encouraged to join and experienced or former Steering Committee members to support their engagement.

3. Expand support of regional / international bodies and NGOs working on rights and health towards SWAN mission and values

Rationale for approach:

There is limited understanding of what an enabling environment for sex workers looks like among potential partners working for social justice and the rights of the vulnerable and marginalized .

In the past, SWAN has successfully enabled national partners to present their reports to CEDAW and advocate to the European Parliament's Women's Rights and Gender Equality Committee. Advocacy to other UN, EU and Council of Europe bodies, and the Global Fund, as well as other institutions has not been successfully explored yet.

Sample activities:

- **Map** existing relevant UN, EU, Council of Europe, Global Fund, OSCE bodies and processes that could be used for advocacy by SWAN and its membership. Produce an overview of consultations, opportunities and timeline for national advocates.
- Identify opportunities to get SWAN's advocacy agenda into the priorities and activities of **UN agencies and donors**, including UNFPA, UNDP, UN Women, UNAIDS and others, the Global Fund. It will be important to monitor the time commitment going into this activity, since the resources put in, need to correspond with the results SWAN sees coming out.
- Find ways to highlight and use **evidence from the human rights documentation project** and national documentation efforts at a global level, including report of lessons learned to be released in August 2014.
- Mobilize international **emergency responses** including from the Global Fund and UN agencies to support sex worker advocates.
- Develop approaches and ways to influence **agendas of human rights mechanisms at EU and Council of Europe levels**: European Human Rights Commissioner, EU Fundamental Rights Agency and Gender Institute.
- Identify potential **regional partners** and human rights groups with whom SWAN needs to develop relations and joint initiatives. These are partners who could help with joint advocacy, including promoting enabling legislative models. Possible partner groups would include the EHRN, ECOM, ITPCru, EKOM, IPPF Europe, La Strada, Human Rights Watch, Penal Reform International, Canadian HIV/AIDS Legal Network, and UNDP's network of human rights defenders. Maintain active partnerships with priority partners.
- Support **regional focus of the campaign** to confront violence against sex workers and interlink it with other campaigns of violence against women in general and women who use drugs.

4. Strengthen SWAN governance and financial sustainability

Rationale:

While there has been substantial progress in developing governance processes over the last 3 years, more needs to be done, especially to make decision making more transparent to the membership. Genuine member engagement has decreased, resulting in members feeling less connected to SWAN and its work. SWAN has not been as efficient as it needs to be in utilizing human resources within the Network (SC, members and staff) to work towards its goals and objectives. In particular, SWAN needs to move faster, in response to opportunities presented, as well as in communication with members, donors and partners.

The funding environment remains extremely challenging. In this situation, SWAN needs to be very strategic in where and with whom proposals are submitted, as well as calibrating the amount of time spent interacting with donors, partners and others in pursuit of support.

Sample Activities:

- Further clarifying of SC role, revise ToR as needed.
- Creating ToR and annual performance indicators for ED.
- Move the organization away from being so dependent on the knowledge and historical memory of the present ED – more shared responsibility created in Secretariat and SC.
- Creating performance review cycle for staff
- Creating an annual workplan, share with members.
- Annual M&E approach created, reflecting back on strategy and workplans. Share M&E results annually with members (from SC) – create mechanisms for members to comment on M&E.
- Communications between SC and members increased. Each SC member takes a topic and a number of countries to focus on. Talking to each SWAN member at least twice a year for feedback and ideas.
- Circulating SC calls/meeting minutes to all members.
- Circulating SWAN grant proposals to all members.
- Strengthen communication, exchange and synergies between SWAN and regional/global networks, including NSWP and ICRSE. Secretariat and SC identify who they will maintain contact with and speak at least 2 times per year on brainstorming ideas/collaborations. Share strategy with partner organizations.
- Hire media/communications staff person. Make specific efforts to identify a Russian speaker, paying special attention to trying to identify sex worker for position.
- Hire mentorship coordinator – focusing on identifying sex worker for this position.
- Link members to objectives? – quarterly calls with membership on objectives.
- Identify and pursue joint funding proposals with EHRN, ECUO, NSWP.
- Delegate more of the proposal writing to SC and members.
- Limit writing member proposals, except perhaps in cases of 8 sex worker led organizations.
- Further diversify sources of funding, including identifying smaller, project oriented grant opportunities.
- Calibrate and evaluate time and effort going in to building and maintaining UN relations.
- Approach HIVOS, Mama Cash, Global Fund for Women and American Jewish World Services.
- Ask OSF to sponsor SWAN presentations at IHRFG (Int'l Human Rights Funders Group), ARIADNE (Network of European HR Funders) and Funders Concerned about AIDS.