

ANNUAL REPORT

2017





List of abbreviations:

- AFEW - AIDS Foundation East West
- CEECA - Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia
- CEDAW - Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination Against Women
- CRG - Community, Rights and Gender Department of Global Fund
- ECOM - Eurasian Coalition on Male Health
- ECUO - Eastern Europe and Central Asia Union of PLWH
- EECA - Eastern Europe and Central Asia
- EHRN - Eurasian Harm Reduction Network
- ENPUD - Eurasian Network of People who Use Drugs
- EWNA - Eurasian Women's Network on AIDS
- GF - Global Fund
- GFATM - Global Fund to fight Aids, Tuberculosis and Malaria
- GNP+ - Global Network of People living with HIV
- HIV - Human Immunodeficiency Virus
- ICRSE - International Committee for the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe
- IWRAW - International Women's Rights Action Watch Asia Pacific
- LGBTQIA - Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, intersex, asexual
- MSM - Man having sex with man
- NGO - Non-governmental organization
- NSWP - Global Network of Sex Work Projects
- PLWH - People Living with HIV
- RCNF - Robert Carr Civil Society Networks Fund
- STI - Sexually Transmitted Infections
- SWIT - Sex Worker Implementation Tool / Implementing comprehensive HIV/STI programed with sex workers
- TA - Technical Assistance
- TB - Tuberculosis
- OSF - Open Society Foundations
- UNAIDS - Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS
- UNFPA - United Nations Populations Fund
- USAID - United States Agency for International Development

ABOUT SWAN

The Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network (SWAN) is a network of sex worker-led organizations and civil society organizations engaged in advocating the human rights of sex workers in Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia. Founded as a regional project in 2006, the network was officially registered as SWAN Foundation in January 2012, with its headquarters in Budapest, Hungary.

SWAN seeks to unite sex workers and advocates and strengthen advocacy for a safer legal environment that ensures human rights of sex workers in Central-Eastern Europe and Central Asia.

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

SWAN currently unites 33 members in 19 countries in Central Eastern Europe and Central Asia.





ACTIVITIES IN 2017

STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 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

- **Engaging with CEDAW**

After some time taken for preparation, SWAN member Healthy Option Projects Skopje (HOPS) from Macedonia, in collaboration with Macedonian Coalition for Sexual and Health Rights of Marginalized Communities, and SWAN itself, in 2017, submitted a request for enquiry under the Article 8 of the Optional Protocol to CEDAW. The request is for CEDAW Committee to consider an inquiry into systematic discrimination against and denial of access to justice for women involved in sex work on the territory of Macedonia for which the state is legally responsible on the international plane. The request is based on the unlawful police raid and force testing on HIV/STI of street sex workers in Skopje, which happened in 2008, and court cases that followed the case. The process of preparation and submission of the inquiry was technically assisted by IWRAW Asia Pacific (<https://www.iwraw-ap.org/>).

- **Media support and visibility for SWAN members and their work**

Following its commitment to support members in their campaigns, in 2017 SWAN continued to amplify the voices of sex workers groups and allies from the region. International Sex workers Day, Labor Day, International AIDS Day, International Day to end Violence against Sex Workers were marked by members and promoted through SWAN media channels. Other news and tools were regularly shared and exchanged.

The [SWAN website](#) counts 35.295 visitors between January 1 - December 31, out of which 93,7% are returning visitors. SWAN maintains a twitter account with 1228 followers, a Facebook page with 427 friends, and a moderated Facebook group of 387 members.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 2:

Improve sex worker capacities to engage in advocacy

- **Robert Carr Network Fund - Consortium of Sex Worker Networks: SWIT Program 2016-2018**

In 2017, SWAN continued its SWIT capacity building and roll out program with the consortium of sex worker networks, led by NSWP. In the European region, 7 countries are participating in this program: Ukraine, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Georgia, Russia (SWAN); Serbia and Macedonia (ICRSE). National level activities

around SWIT include: building the capacity of sex workers to advocate for the SWIT, watchdogging of service delivery, identifying main barriers to accessing prevention services, advocating for SWIT as normative guidelines to be included in national Global Fund grant applications, community mobilization in cities that do not have initiative groups and thematic meetings on combating violence, advocacy, campaigning and outreach work. As part of knowledge sharing and learning, SWAN organized a South-South exchange: 1 member of All-Ukrainian Charitable Organization “LEGALIFE-UKRAINE” visited Myanmar to meet with local community organization and learn about monitoring & evaluation and community mobilization in Myanmar.



● Global Fund capacity building

In the framework of capacity building around GFATM related processes, this year, SWAN and NSWP provided technical support to the sex worker led organization Women for Freedom in Tbilisi, Georgia. The technical support was about understanding the Global Fund processes, establishing partnerships, assessing the needs of the group for further support to be meaningfully engaged in processes regarding sex work in the country, with focus on transitioning from GFATM. SWAN assisted Women for Freedom in joint meetings with potential partners and allies and exploring opportunities for collaboration and support. In addition, a technical assistance request to the Global Fund to assist with engaging in the National Health/Disease Strategy post transition was developed, however not approved.

SWAN and NSWP also provided technical support to the election process for the sex worker representative for the Ukrainian CCM. The support included developing election procedures and assisting in preparation of documents for the elections. The process resulted with a sex workers representative and an alternate chosen.





● Community mobilization

Last few years the HIV trends and HIV focused interventions mainly supported by UN agencies and Global Fund proved very beneficial for sex workers groups in countries of EECA. But this in turn has left sex workers in Central European countries to face precarity and lack of sustainability in their efforts to mobilize, organize, respond to violence, resist marginalization or engage in decision making. SWAN is aware that Central European groups and individual activists are also in need of community mobilization and support in terms of trainings, translation (access to information in local languages) and connections to the movement. In 2017 SWAN and ICRSE, organized 2 community gatherings for local sex workers in Poland and Albania.

Poland

The 3 day meeting in Poland, organized together with Sex Work Polska, gathered sex workers of various genders, with different experiences across all types of sex work, coming from different parts of Poland and with various experience of migration to Western Europe. The group mapped various working conditions, chose certain issues they would like to mobilize around, defined potential activities to organize and pinned down all potential allies. As part of this community gathering, on the last day, Sex Work Polska, SWAN, ICRSE and allies such as Foundation for Social Policy Prekursor, Political Critique and [Kampania Przeciw Homofobii](#) organized and open seminar on the situation of sex workers in Europe and Poland. The seminar gathered interested parties and potential allies from other movements, LGBT and trans groups, local civil society groups which had a lot of insightful questions or comments to add.

Albania

Albania is one of the countries in our region with full criminalization of sex work, and lack of sex workers' self-organizing. The 2-day training was organized with support of Aleanca, an LGBT organization. The training was attended by young Trans and MSM sex workers. Their situation is very precarious with many of them living in the LGBT shelter or in the streets. Aside from focusing on access to justice with the session led by the Commissioner for protection of discrimination,



- Double discrimination: both as trans/LGBT individuals and as sex workers;
- Health: limited access to health services and discrimination/bad services in health settings;
- Criminalization and police abuse;

These three themes were presented by sex workers on the third day, at the round table with NGOs and allies. Some strategies that would benefit sex workers were also presented: Support for sex worker self-organizing, development of a drop-in with condoms, testing and legal support, sensitization trainings with police, health professionals and social service, documenting human rights abuses/ research on discrimination, CEDAW shadow reporting, roll out of SWIT, decriminalization campaigns.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 3:

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

- **Regional projects and initiatives:**

Regional Communications Platform EECA

This project started in 2016 and finished in 2017. It was implemented by EECA Consortium (EHRN, ECUO, ECOM, SWAN, ENPUD, TBEC) in 2016, led by Alliance for Public Health Ukraine, and funded by GFATM. The aim of the project was to facilitate the access of communities to information on Global Fund and its processes, and increase the demand for technical assistance.

Within this project SWAN has developed a video and community guide on the community's engagement in Global Fund supported processes on the national level.

"Engaging in Global Fund Process. A Community Perspective" (<https://youtu.be/YaPooYloQdM>) reflects the experiences of sex workers' communities from 6 countries: Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine, Georgia, Russia, Kazakhstan and Macedonia. It explores and promotes the examples of leadership and meaningful engagement of sex workers communities into national responses towards HIV, but also highlights the challenges and barriers



HOW TO ENGAGE IN GLOBAL FUND SUPPORTED PROCESSES ON NATIONAL LEVEL

community guide




Community guide (http://www.swannet.org/userfiles/GF_guide_ENG_interactive.pdf) provides basic info about the main structure and grant making process supported by Global Fund on national level. It provides information on where community can and should engage, in which ways, why it is important, and share tips on what community can do in cases when attempts to engage in these processes are unsuccessful.

Regional GF EECA Cities Initiative

This regional GFATM grant started in the beginning of 2017 and will end December 2019. Primary recipients are Alliance for Public Health Ukraine, AFEW, and Contact Netz (from Switzerland), while SWAN is partner and sub-recipient. The goal of the project is to develop models of sustainable city responses to HIV and TB in key populations in EECA that significantly contribute to achieving 90-90-90 HIV/TB targets for key populations.





The project is implemented in cities of Sofia (Bulgaria), Almaty (Kazakhstan), Odesa (Ukraine), Tbilisi (Georgia) and Balti (Moldova). SWAN provides technical assistance in all five cities, through existing SWAN members in respective countries, except in Balti. In Moldova SWAN does not have an existing member organization, so the technical support is provided directly from SWAN Secretariat, and collaboration with national service providers.

All of the activities are focused on community mobilization and capacity building for meaningful engagement in HIV response on municipality level.

- **Some of the regional and global meetings attended by SWAN in 2017:**

UNFPA-UBRAF: Within the long term collaboration between SWAN and UNFPA, SWAN Program Officer attended the UNFPA EECA HIV and UBRAF RIAP Review and Planning Meeting in which centering on comprehensive HIV packages for key populations and marginalized women was discussed and partnerships were reviewed.

Initial Consultation Reflecting on Regional Investment Guidance for Eastern Europe and Central Asia 2014-2017. In April of 2017, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GF), with support from Eurasian Harm Reduction Network (EHRN) organized the first meeting with regional networks as well as civil society leaders and various technical partners to gather multi-sectoral inputs to inform a framework for the next multi-country grant in the EECA region.

Some of the key discussions and issues that came out of this meeting were: to expand the guidance to address all key populations and re-orient the guidance to focus on a range of services. Furthermore, the worsened political and human rights environment for key populations in the CEECA region was discussed, as rising conservatism and increased violence undermine prevention efforts. These issues are not adequately addressed through current funding mechanisms. There is a limited amount of funding available in the CEECA region for a multi-country


grant proposal and discussions were held around potential partnerships and similarities in sub regions (Russia, Balkans). While there was a strong sense of agreement on the value of networks and working together on a multi-country grant proposal, at this initial stage here was no consensus on what this proposal might look like.

Robert Carr Network Fund - Collective Impact Reflections Workshop:

SWAN Executive Director was invited to participate in this reflective meeting on the MEL (monitoring, evaluation and learning) framework developed by the Robert Carr Network Fund, in Amsterdam. The meeting aimed at understanding what the RCNF grantees and the fund have learnt in the 5 years of the Funds' existence and how this has contributed to a sustaining and effective HIV/AIDS response.

SWAN Program Officer and members from Kazakhstan, Russia and Ukraine participated in the **Eurasian Harm Reduction Conference**, in Vilnius Lithuania.





Dialogue with Hungary - based Public Health Grantees - OSF invited Stasa Plecas (SWAN Foundation), Peter Sarosi (Drugreport Foundation) and Stefania Kapronczay (HCLU) to speak at a panel session attended by the PHP Advisory board on the new circumstances and legislation regarding 'Foreign agents' and specifically Soros funded programs and the consequences this has for the organization's work and how the organizations respond to this new shrinking civil society space, and how OSF funding has impacted the work of the organizations.

Global Expert meeting - *Developing an Evaluation Framework for SWIT roll-out*- Kiev: The meeting was part of the NSWP program of activities being carried out as part of the LINKAGES program. NSWP organized the meeting in partnership with SWAN in September 2017. The expert meeting brought together sex workers from all five NSWP regions as well as LINKAGES, USAID and UNAIDS and co-sponsors to develop an evaluation framework for the roll-out of the SWIT at national level by sex worker-led organizations and create a framework for meaningful involvement of sex workers in policy and program development, implementation and evaluation. In 2018, the evaluation framework will be implemented in Ukraine.

Global Fund Expert Training - Siem Reap: as part of the Global Fund capacity building program, NSWP, MSMGF, GNP+ and INPUD organized a global workshop to train regional and national experts on the Global Fund. Nata Isaeva and Stasa Plecas who had attended 2 previous expert workshops participated in this continuation training and are expected to apply this knowledge in the capacity-building program in the EECA region, specifically aimed at understanding and participating in transition processes.



STRATEGIC OBJECTIVE 4:

Strengthen SWAN governance and financial sustainability

- **Evaluation and strategic planning**

With OSF support, SWAN was able to hire a consultant to lead an evaluation of the SWAN Strategy 2014-2017 and development of a new strategic plan for 2018-2022. SWAN Management Committee identified members, both service providers and sex worker led organizations, and partners and stakeholders for in-depth interviews. In addition to interviews and online survey was completed by 14 organizations from 12 countries. Overall, the evaluation of the previous strategy is very positive, noting that most respondents felt that SWAN activities helped in achieving the strategic goal.

In November, based on evaluation and directions from members, a strategy development meeting was held in Budapest with SWAN Management Committee, with technical support from NSWP. The Management Committee identified strategic objectives and pathways (activities) on how to achieve those. The finalization of the Strategic Plan is in the process, and its final approval is planned for the beginning of 2018.

- **Donors**

This year, SWAN work was financially supported by the following donors:

Open Society Foundations

Robert Carr Civil Society Network Fund

Red Umbrella Fund

GFATM CRG Special Initiative: Regional Communications Platform EECA

GFATM: Alliance for Public Health: Regional GF EECA Cities Initiative