



Global Network of Sex Work Projects Limited, Company No: SC349355  
Registered Office: c/o SCOT-PEP, 70 Newhaven Road,  
Edinburgh EH6 5QG, Scotland UK  
Email: [secretariat@nswp.org](mailto:secretariat@nswp.org)  
Tel: +44 (0)131 622 7550

## Strategic Plan: 2010 - 2012

### Introduction

This paper sets out the priorities of the Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) developed for the period 2010-2012. It records the outcomes of the 2009 strategic planning process undertaken by the NSWP Board and is intended to inform both internal discussions and conversations with potential donors. This Strategic Plan will be adapted and developed into formal funding proposals for NSWP core activities.

The paper begins by describing the aims, history, rationale and current structure of the NSWP, and identifying particular challenges and assumptions. It outlines NSWP priority human rights and health issues and identifies specific advocacy and capacity building activities for addressing them.

### The NSWP

The Global Network of Sex Work Projects exists to uphold the voice of sex workers globally and connect regional networks advocating for the rights of female, male and transgender sex workers. It advocates for rights based health and social services, freedom from abuse and discrimination, and self determination for sex workers.

The Network was established as an informal alliance in 1992 by a group of sex worker rights activists working within sex work projects around the world. The primary aims established at that time remain unchanged. They are to:

- Provide practical information and opportunities for information sharing among organisations and projects, which provide services to men, women, and transsexuals who work in the sex industry.
- Raise awareness of the health and welfare needs of sex workers.
- Advocate at regional and global level for policies and action, which further the human rights of sex workers. These rights include the right to health and a safe working environment free from abuse, violence, and discrimination.
- Develop and maintain links between service providers, sex worker organisations and relevant international institutions and agencies.
- Facilitate opportunities for the voices of sex workers to be heard in relevant international forums.

## Human Rights

The NSWP has a particular commitment to human rights. It reaffirms that sex workers, like all individuals, are entitled to the following rights under international human rights treaties<sup>1</sup>:

- The right to work, to free choice of employment, and to just and favourable conditions of work.
- The right to life, liberty and security of person
- The right to be free from arbitrary interference with one's private and family life, home or correspondence and from attacks on honour and reputation
- The right to the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health
- The right to freedom of movement and residence
- The right to be free from slavery, forced labour and servitude
- The right to equal protection of the law and protection against discrimination and any incitement to discrimination under any of the varied and intersecting status of gender, race, citizenship, sexual orientation etc
- The right to marry and found a family
- The right to peaceful assembly and association
- The right to leave any country, including one's own, and to return to one's own country
- The right to seek asylum and to non-refoulement
- The right to participate in the cultural and public life of society

## The Rationale for the NSWP

The standard paradigms through which sex work is currently viewed – AIDS, trafficking, and violence against women – fail to fully address the human rights of sex workers. It is therefore crucial that sex workers represent their own realities and fully participate in dialogues and decision making about issues that affect them. Achieving these requires sex workers to organise at local, national, regional and international levels. Local level organising helps to identify the actual issues faced by sex workers at grass roots level, and enables sex workers to respond through action with the local communities and authorities that discriminate against them. National level organising helps to feed the concerns of grassroots groups into national level forums, helps reset the agenda, and helps to identify factors such as legislation and resource allocation that affect sex workers.

Organising at international (including regional) level brings local and national level experiences to bear in international debates, particularly important given the global attention to issues such as AIDS, trafficking, migration and human rights. The NSWP has already achieved a great deal, but global acceptance of sex worker rights continues to be elusive, and is manifested by the continued abuses faced by sex workers all over the world. Against this backdrop, the NSWP plays a crucial role in supporting and facilitating sex workers voices and promoting human rights and public health.

The NSWP conducts a mix of pro-active and re-active policy advocacy to support human rights and evidence based approaches to female, male and transgendered sex workers and strengthening sex worker communities. The work will be arranged around

**a) Communications and advocacy.** Information relevant to sex workers human rights and health is not sufficiently accessible, particularly for those who do not read English. The NSWP summarises, translates and distributes relevant information to its members and beyond. This is particularly important for places where there are no organised sex workers groups or rights based sex work programmes. Five languages have currently been prioritised - Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish. NSWP advocacy is supported by policy analysis, research and consultation with members.

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1. The rights listed are drawn from those prioritised in The Declaration of the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe, endorsed by 120 sex workers and 80 allies from 30 countries at the European Conference on Sex Work, Human Rights, Labour and Migration, October 2005, Brussels. [http://www.sexworkeurope.org/site/index.php?option=com\\_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=199](http://www.sexworkeurope.org/site/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=35&Itemid=199)

**b) Building Capacity and Solidarity** - Training and skills building for and among sex worker organisations and leaders achieved by developing and providing tools, training, space and support on issues such as human rights, health interventions, law and policy, ethics and technologies.

**c) Establishing and maintaining good governance, accountability and management practices.** The NSWP will continue the process of internal organisational development. Regular management meetings and elections will take place and an organisational manual will be developed.

## History and Achievements of the NSWP

The NSWP previously conducted activities in partnership with other organisations<sup>2</sup>, with human resources contributed by NSWP members. Despite lacking resources and recognition, the NSWP has achieved a great deal. It has influenced policy and built leadership among sex workers and facilitated the development of regional and national networks of sex workers and sex work projects. Significantly NSWP participation in the global response to HIV/AIDS was largely responsible for the term 'sex worker' replacing 'prostitute' in many languages. More than mere political correctness, this shift in language had the important effect of moving global understandings of sex work toward a labour framework which signposts solutions to many of the problems faced by sex workers. It also questions the stigma of sex work and represents greater recognition of sex workers as rights bearers, with the capacity to make a difference. It has been the sharpest of the tools available to sex workers to assert their human rights including the right to health.

As a result of NSWP advocacy, sex workers have presented the case for protection of their human rights at important international forums such as international and regional conferences on AIDS, the Fourth World Conference on Women in Beijing 1995, numerous UN consultations, UNGASS, and the UNAIDS Programme Co-ordinating Board. The NSWP successfully lobbied for wording of the UN convention against trafficking in persons (the Palermo Protocol) to ensure that trafficking is defined as including force or coercion. NSWP, along with its regional networks, was also successful in urging UNAIDS to reconsider its 2007 policy guidelines on HIV and sex work and has been invited to co-chair the newly formed UNAIDS Advisory Group on HIV and Sex Work. NSWP members participated in various consultations around the Global Fund including the development of the SOGI strategy, which covers female, male and transgender sex workers. NSWP has maintained strong links with other key networks such as ICASO and ITPC Global. In addition to the above convening and advocacy the NSWP published *Making Sex Work Safe* in 1996; publishes a regular journal (*Research for Sex Work*); maintains global and regional listservs; and manages a website containing some of the most influential and important work on HIV and sex work. NSWP work has been widely acknowledged and NSWP regional networks and members have received various awards.

Regional networks have developed and the principle of the participation of sex workers in HIV/AIDS policy and strategy development has been accepted at many levels. As a result sex workers are active within a number of important forums including committees of the UN and Global Fund for Aids, Malaria and TB. In a number of countries the acceptance of sex workers as advocates has been so great that the demand for meaningful participation is difficult to meet because of lack of both human and financial resources, as well as time constraints for those also running services for sex workers. However, in many countries sex workers have been seen as targets for interventions and have not been supported to organise and engage.

## NSWP Membership and Governance.

The NSWP was registered as an independent legal entity in 2008, following an organisational review in 2006/7 that recognised the need for a permanent secretariat, staff and an accountable management

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<sup>2</sup> These include Healthlink UK, Empower Foundation Thailand, Aspasie Switzerland, Anti Slavery International UK, Urban Justice Centre USA, ENDA Senegal, the International HIV/Aids Alliance UK, Stella Canada, Aproase Mexico and SCOT-PEP UK.

structure, to carry out a strategic program of communications, capacity building and advocacy. The review recommended the NSWP formalise its membership structure, becoming a network of organisations (rather than individuals), and establish a secretariat in the global north. The United Kingdom was selected as the location and the organisation incorporated as a not for profit private company limited by guarantee with its registered office in Scotland.

NSWP members are regional sex work networks and organisations from all global regions. Member organisations are from diverse cultures and they have different backgrounds and organizational histories. Some are sex workers groups, some are small NGOs, some are projects within government organisations or international NGOs. Almost all work on health issues. Some provide services, some focus on advocacy, some on mobilising to reduce vulnerability and address the human rights issues that affect sex workers health and well-being. Some member organisations work with all genders and some with only men, transgenders or women. A number of member organisations work with the children of sex workers. To become members of the NSWP an organisation agrees to recognise sex work as work, oppose the criminalisation of sex work and support the self-organising and self-determination of sex workers. All members must be committed to challenging stigma and discrimination to defending human rights and to promoting rights based services and policies.

An Interim Board is currently in place while the new governance system is implemented. The NSWP will be governed by a Board of 11 Directors, with regional elections to nominate 2 representatives from Africa, Asia and Pacific, Europe, Latin America and North America; and a global election for a President. Board members are nominated for a period of two years, one regional board member will rotate of the Board each year, but may be re-nominated for up to four terms. Regional networks determine their own criteria and method for electing their representatives onto the NSWP Board. Regional elections are currently underway, following which the election for President will be organised over the global member's listserv.

The NSWP organisational culture and rules ensure it is led by sex workers and that sex workers are meaningfully involved at all levels. The requirement that NSWP members support 'sex worker self determination' is interpreted as placing an obligation on members and the NSWP itself to take all practical steps to ensure that representatives and participants in NSWP activities are sex workers

The NSWP is committed to facilitating voices of sex workers in both the Global North and South while recognising the factors that drive inequality and global injustice. The NSWP recognises there are a diversity of issues and perspectives among sex workers and strives to make a respectful and accessible space for dialogue and action. Strategies for strengthening participation by sex workers focus on the Global South and include establishing a multi lingual website, language skills and mentoring programmes.

## Assumptions and Challenges

People engage in sex work in many different forms, and it involves many different types of men, transgenders and women as buyers and sellers of sexual services. People from various backgrounds work in sex industries around the world and they are often very different to the stereotypes and caricatures. For some sex work is their only occupation while many have other sources of income. Motivations of sex workers, clients and all other actors involved in the sex industry vary immensely. Very often, sex work is experienced as a bearable occupation, rather than an ideal one, which is how many, or even most, people feel about their jobs.

Despite this considerable diversity, sex workers the world over face many common issues

- Sex work is rarely recognised as legitimate work.
- Sex workers are particularly vulnerable to violence and other abuses. Much of this is perpetrated by state agents and/or facilitated by lack of legal and social protection.
- Criminalisation and ambiguous laws govern sex work in most countries, so that whatever the precise legal provisions, it is problematic to practise sex work without breaking a law at some level, thereby increasing the vulnerability of sex workers.
- Poor working conditions and lack of legal protection.

- Lack of access to generic programmes and facilities that provide social and economic benefits within communities because of the stigma and discrimination faced by sex workers.
- Stigma and discrimination against female, male and transgender sex workers, clients and the sex industry.
- Unethical research and interventions, particularly in the context of HIV and anti-trafficking programmes.
- Lack of access to general health care, including sexual and reproductive health services
- Enforced “rescue”, detention and deportation as responses to migrant sex work and people smuggling.
- The conflation of sex work with trafficking and sexual exploitation of children which is driving inappropriate responses to the sex industry that deny sex workers their basic rights.
- Inappropriate programming that fails to recognise sex workers as agents in their own lives and leads to exploitation and further stigmatization of sex workers by the very agencies that are meant to empower sex workers.
- Sex workers are routinely excluded from developing programmes and policies that affect them.
- Programmes and policies for sex workers are often based on assumptions, substandard research and ideology not evidence.

Policies and programmes for sex workers frequently fail to recognise the diversity of sex workers experience, and too often, they ignore male and transgender sex workers. As a result sex workers and their families the world over are discriminated against and their fundamental human rights are not protected. Sex workers are frequently discussed in the context of HIV and public health, but often within a discourse of them as potential transmitters of HIV rather than as rights bearers. Similarly, discussions about trafficking cast migrant sex workers as victims of exploitation and slavery while the discourse about violence against women locates the blame for violence against sex workers in the nature of sex work itself. Underpinning these responses to sex work is the fact that, the world over, sex work is seen as immoral and none of these three approaches recognises the diversity described above or the nature of human rights issues as sex workers experience them.

## **NSWP Goals, Strategies and Activities 2010 - 2012**

NSWP has identified three short to mid term goals, each goal has a number of strategies that will be used to achieve the goals, and each strategy has a number of immediate core activities that are required to consolidate a stable foundation for the future of the global network. Our focus in this strategic plan is on the core activities required in 2010, which can be anticipated as remaining constant for 2011 and beyond. Examples of future additional activities are provided at the end of each strategy but have not been costed within this plan, development costings for these additional activities will be prepared for 2011 and beyond as the organisation becomes ready to take on further commitments from a place of strength.

### **Goal 1. Convene and build on the NSWP achievements as the global network committed to the realisation of sex workers’ human rights**

The effectiveness of the NSWP, as well as its credibility, will be enhanced by strengthened governance – including regular board meetings, annual reports and a formal code of conduct. To achieve this NSWP will consolidate its new organisational structure; expand membership; and appoint regional representatives to manage the NSWP.

To enable NSWP to operate it will establish a secretariat office in Edinburgh UK to function as a co-ordination hub for organisational development and activities.

For membership in the global NSWP to be meaningful, and for representation in its governance to be fair resources are required to ensure that relevant information is accessible to as many sex work organisations, in as many languages, as possible.

**Strategy i: Maintaining and expanding network membership**

- Establish a secretariat in Edinburgh and set up resource management and communication systems
- Maintain and update membership and company records
- Develop promotional material to raise awareness of the NSWP and attract new members
- Publicise the NSWP to sex work projects throughout the world both directly and through other networks.
- Provide member organisations with information and opportunities to participate in NSWP activities.

**Resources required:** Staff; communications, office and operating costs; translation; copy editing, graphic design, proof reading, printing and distribution costs.

**Strategy ii: Maintaining regular network communications on global policy issues, emerging debates and crises, and internal network business**

- Host and moderate global and regional listservs for NSWP members
- Maintain and update interactive multi-lingual member only section of NSWP website
- Disseminate regular updates and briefing papers to NSWP members
- Implement new information communication technologies for sharing information that strengthen advocacy and capacity at local, regional and global levels.
- Disseminate publications, videos and other materials that support sex workers claims for human rights and rights based services.

**Resources required:** Staff and IT & website consultants; communication, office and operating costs; IT set up costs; web and mail hosting.

**Strategy iii: Maintaining credible and effective network governance procedures**

- Election of President and nomination of regional representatives on Board of Directors
- Induction of NSWP Board of Directors
- Annual Board meeting and quarterly conference calls
- Development of NSWP organisational tools including a members code of conduct and Board Members handbook of policies and procedures
- Preparation of updates and briefing papers for NSWP board members and regional network leaders
- Preparation of reports for donors and members
- Preparation of funding proposals

**Resources required:** Staff & facilitation consultant; communication, office and operational costs; translation; copy editing, graphic design, proof reading, printing and distribution costs; travel, subsistence & venue hire.

**Goal 2. Build and strengthen leadership among sex workers**

The NSWP will play a key role in strengthening sex worker organisations and sex worker leaders at regional and national levels. The NSWP has significant expertise in network building, campaigning, representation and will share this expertise with its members. It will particularly prioritise regions and countries where sex worker organising is less developed, and where sex worker organisations find it impossible to get support from other sources. Sex worker organisations and networks will receive advice on areas such as community mobilisation, governance and conflict resolution. Emerging sex worker leaders will receive support in a number of areas such as policy analysis; representation; the international sector; human rights and legal frameworks; and documentation. The NSWP will develop mentoring relationships between experienced and emerging sex worker leaders. These relationships will involve on-going email and telephone/skype contact as well as the participants attending key events together. This method of capacity building is currently well established but informal within the NSWP.

This capacity building will not only enable national and regional sex worker organisations to engage more effectively in their own work and policy forums; it will also strengthen the NSWP itself by strengthening members and creating new leaders.

### **Strategy i: Build the capacity of sex worker networks and organisations**

- Provide advice and information through outreach to emerging networks, supporting the emerging African network will be a priority.
- Monitor priority policy issues; analyse them with reference to sex workers rights and the NSWP aims, and disseminate clear, concise briefing papers about them.
- Disseminate the updated electronic version of 'Making Sex Work Safe' (in English).

**Resources required:** Staff & researcher consultants; communication, office and operational costs; translation; copy editing, graphic design, proof reading, printing and distribution costs.

*Future activities:*

- Print and disseminate 'Making Sex Work Safe';
- adaptations of NSWP resources to other languages; and
- resource mobilisation for future regional projects and regional and global events and meetings.

### **Strategy ii: Build the capacity of emerging sex worker leaders**

- Develop and document a mentoring programme for emerging sex worker leaders supported by experienced sex worker rights advocates at national, regional and international levels. Through providing opportunities for sex workers to attend meetings and work with more experienced sex worker rights advocates in order to learn through observation and participation at various levels of engagement, from national consultancies to high level intergovernmental and UN meetings
- Provide information about access to on-line language support services, and local and distance language learning opportunities

**Resources required:** staff; communication, office and operational costs; translation; travel and subsistence.

*Future activities:*

- Develop a language school that focuses on improving English language skills to enable sex workers globally to improve their access to participate and advocate in high level international meetings and debates and to communicate with each other.
- Develop leadership training workshops to enable sex worker advocates to understand the architecture of government, intergovernmental agencies, international NGOs, development and public health institutions; understand the basic theories of human rights and legal and policy frameworks that affect sex workers and human rights violation documentation; and become confident in being able to conduct community based research, compile presentations, follow meeting protocols, document advocacy activities, produce reports, and provide feedback to communities

## **Goal 3. Promote rights and evidence based policies and programmes affecting sex workers**

NSWP has a number of strategies for promoting rights and evidence based practice. NSWP members will continue to engage in global and regional policy forums and events such as the UNAIDS Advisory Group on HIV and Sex Work, the UNDP Independent Commission on Decriminalisation (around laws that discriminate against vulnerable populations), and the International AIDS Conferences. At the same time, the NSWP aims to become an active and credible participant in global forums dealing with other issues such as women's rights, labour, anti-trafficking, and migration.

NSWP will also support members in responding to emerging developments or crises, for instance crackdowns on sex workers; the introduction of repressive laws and policies ; unethical medical trials, HIV testing and treatment; and anti-trafficking initiatives. The NSWP, in collaboration with a range of partners, will produce and disseminate high quality materials and research; it will also identify materials and research produced by others and disseminate them to a wide audience.

An essential component of ensuring rights and evidenced based policy and programmes is realised is making information and reports accessible to organisations working with sex workers at regional, national and local levels.

### **Strategy i. Participate in global and regional level policy and programme forums related to sex work**

- Co-chair and participate in the UNAIDS Advisory Group on HIV and Sex Work, ensuring regional and gender balance, to support and advise UNAIDS (Secretariat and Cosponsors) to enhance the effectiveness of the design, implementation and evaluation of UNAIDS policy, programmes, advocacy and capacity-building activities related to HIV and sex work.
- Engage with UNDP and give evidence to the Independent Commission on Decriminalisation, ensuring that sex workers voices are heard and evidence from their lived experiences is considered.
- Promote and support the implementation of meaningful participation of regional sex workers networks in consultations, training and public awareness programmes on HIV and sex work.
- Publicise and coordinate sex workers participation in the International AIDS Conferences, including seeking funding for a scholarship fund and arranging pre-meetings.

**Resources required:** staff, conference coordination and training consultants; communication, office and operational costs; translation; conference fees, travel and subsistence, shipping and venue hire.

#### *Future activities*

- Build alliances with the international and national labour movements and gather support for the global recognition of sex work as labour and a motion seeking to have sex work recognised as an occupational category by ILO.
- Work with the womens' movement to build alliances that recognise and support sex workers human rights.

### **Strategy ii. Providing rapid, coordinated responses to policies and practices that create crises situations that will dramatically and negatively affect sex workers and their vulnerability.**

- Assist regional networks and local members to document crises situations.
- Draft written alerts and briefing papers in response to emerging crises facing sex workers and disseminate them at global, regional and national levels.
- Develop campaigns that make use of popular and mass media such as social networking websites, twitter, skype etc. These technologies have the advantage of being universal and accommodating to those who do not read and write full text English.

**Resources required:** staff; communication, office and operational costs; translation.

### **Strategy iii. Producing research and resources on policy and best practice**

- Publish the annual NSWSP journal Research for Sex Work.
- Disseminate electronic version of updated Making Sex Work Safe (and develop funding proposals to have it printed in hard copy and translated into other languages).
- Draft briefing papers on key policy developments and examples of good practice
- Work in partnership with the Paulo Longo Research Initiative (PLRI) in developing research proposals that respond to the gaps in knowledge and evidence required to support rights based policy and best practice.

**Resources required:** staff and research consultants; communication, office and operational costs; translation; copy editing, graphic design, proof reading, printing and distribution costs; conference fees, travel and subsistence and venue hire.

#### *Future activities*

- Produce training resource for health and social care professionals that focuses on informed consent, confidentiality, non-discrimination and duty to care
- Coordinate the production of articles on NSWSP priority areas to submit for publication in books, peer reviewed journals and on-line and print newspapers and media.

### **Strategy iv. Communicating and disseminating research and resources**

- Update and further develop multi-lingual interactive public access website, bringing together publications, research, tools and resources that promote a rights based approach to sex work and challenge programming that ignores or violates sex workers rights.
- Present NSWSP positions and publications during conferences and events



**Resources required:** Staff and IT consultant; communication, office and operational costs; translation; copy editing, graphic design, proof reading, printing and distribution costs; conference fees, travel and subsistence.

*Future activities:*

- Coordinate the production of videos about NSWSP priority areas to support campaigns and raise public awareness

## Human and Financial Resources

The NSWSP will employ the following staff to implement this strategic plan: **Coordinator** – who, as the senior staff officer, will be responsible for promoting and managing the network activities and working with the Board of Directors to develop organisational policies, protocols and tools. **Communication and Information Officer** – who will be responsible for developing and implementing the communication strategy and assisting in the drafting of updates, briefing papers and reports. **Administrator** – who will be responsible for the development and implementation of administrative, office and financial management systems. In addition, **consultants** will be contracted to assist the staff team in implementing effective information communication technology; facilitate Board induction; undertake research beyond the capacity of staff; and facilitate trainings and workshops beyond staff capacity.

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