



Global Network of Sex Work Projects
Promoting Health and Human Rights

Enhancing sex workers' capacity to engage with Global Fund processes:

*Evaluating NSWP's 2018
capacity building programme*

case **STUDY**



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SUMMARY

This case study focuses on the NSWSP's Global Fund capacity development programme for regional and national sex worker-led organisations and assesses its impact. The programme helps target groups to gain knowledge of and meaningfully engage with Global Fund processes.

The findings of this case study demonstrate that the capacity development programme has had a positive impact on sex workers and sex worker-led organisations in the five regions the programme works in (Asia and the Pacific, Africa, Caribbean, Latin America and Eastern Europe and Central Asia). It has increased their understanding of and engagement with Global Fund processes, providing a foundation for the long-term process of capacity building.

INTRODUCTION

NSWP received a grant from the Global Fund in the second half of 2017 to enhance the capacity of sex worker-led organisations to meaningfully engage in Global Fund and national processes. NSWSP previously received a Global Fund grant (via the Robert Carr civil society Networks Fund, known as RCF) from 2015 to the beginning of 2017 to build the capacity of sex worker-led organisations in understanding and engaging in Global Fund processes. The current programme supports a range of activities to continue this capacity building, and involves countries that have not previously benefitted from similar capacity building activities. This case study focuses on the impact of these interventions in 2018, specifically:

- The degree to which regional networks and community experts are equipped to provide technical support to sex worker-led organisations in engaging in Global Fund-related processes;
- The capacity within sex worker-led organisations to effectively engage in Global Fund-related processes and advocate for Global Fund-supported rights-based sex worker programming, including transition planning.



The Global Fund is one of the world's largest funders of testing, treatment and care for people living with HIV, tuberculosis and malaria. It is a partnership between governments, civil society, the private sector and people living with or affected by one or more of the three diseases. The Global Fund does not implement programmes, but funds governments and organisations in eligible countries. The Global Fund gives funding to Principal Recipients in each country, who then distribute funds to Sub-Recipients. Sex workers are disproportionately affected by HIV and are recognised as a key population by the Global Fund. In 2016, the Global Fund adopted the Sex Worker Implementation Tool (SWIT)¹ as the normative international guidance for their programmes. The SWIT calls for community-led evidence and rights-based HIV prevention, treatment, care and support programmes. The Global Fund does not directly fund community organisations. Sex worker-led organisations are often not meaningfully included in the Global Fund

national processes that could ensure they receive vital funding for community-led sex worker programming and benefit from rights-based programming. Stigma and discrimination, as well as criminalisation, also contribute to sex workers' exclusion from or marginalisation within national processes. As such, sex worker-led organisations must be proactive in engaging with these processes and advocating for the inclusion of sex worker-led responses.

In light of this, NSWP and five regional networks (APNSW, ASWA, CSWC, PLAPERTS and SWAN²) developed a programme of activities that aims to support sex worker-led groups to more effectively engage with the Global Fund and create sustainable change for sex workers globally.

Details on the countries' involvement in the programme in 2018 can be found below. All 27 countries were offered technical support from the Senior Programme Officer and the Community Experts in their region.

Region	Countries implementing national activities and receiving technical support	Countries offered technical support
Africa	Democratic Republic of Congo, Kenya, Rwanda, Senegal, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zimbabwe	
Asia and the Pacific	Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Viet Nam	Cambodia, Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Thailand
Caribbean	Guyana, Suriname	Jamaica
Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA)	Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine	Kazakhstan
Latin America	Colombia, Ecuador	El Salvador, Peru

1 WHO, UNFPA, UNAIDS, NSWP, The World Bank, UNDP, 2013, [Sex Worker Implementation Tool](#)

2 Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW); African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA); Caribbean Sex Work Coalition (CSWC); La Plataforma Latinoamérica de Personas que Ejercen el Trabajo Sexual (PLAPERTS); and Sex Workers' Rights Advocacy Network for Central and Eastern Europe and Central Asia (SWAN)



Context

The criminalised nature of sex work remains a cornerstone of the social, political and legal paradigm for the sex workers involved in the programme. All 27 countries involved in the programme retain some form of criminalisation of sex work. 22 of the 27 explicitly criminalise sex workers. The criminalisation of sex work means that sex workers are limited in how they engage with their governments and other institutions. Where sex work is criminalised, sex workers risk punitive measures for speaking publicly. There is likely to be a higher degree of distrust between sex workers and government institutions, due (in part) to stigma and whorephobia, and poor treatment experienced by sex workers.

The programme is taking place as many countries prepare for transition away from Global Fund financing, with many of the countries in this programme projected to become ineligible for Global Fund financing for HIV programmes in the coming years. Kazakhstan and Malaysia are predicted to become ineligible for HIV funding by 2023 and 2025 respectively³. Many other countries are already involved in discussions around transition, and 4 of the regional convenings held as part of this programme focused on transition.

2018 Activities

In November 2017, NSWP and other key population networks organised a five-day global workshop on Global Fund processes. The workshop was organised by the NSWP Senior Programme Officer, in collaboration with Global Fund representatives and global key population networks that are members of the Community Leadership & Action Collaborative (CLAC). The sex worker participants were the programme's Community Experts: people with extensive knowledge in the region who have previously benefited from capacity building regarding the Global Fund. The workshop focused on utilising the SWIT to effectively engage with and contribute to the development, implementation and oversight of Global Fund-supported programming and transition planning. Community Experts built their capacity to provide technical support in their regions during the implementation of this programme in 2018–19. The meeting also explored opportunities for partnerships between key populations and regional/national networks. Following this global workshop, NSWP, regional networks and national sex worker-led organisations carried out the following activities in 2018.

³ The Global Fund to End AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, 2018, Projected Transitions from Global Fund support by 2025 – projections by component



Regional convenings

All five regions in the programme organised regional convenings, bringing together national representatives from sex worker-led organisations to share knowledge, identify priorities, and develop strategies to address common challenges.

Regional convenings in the Caribbean, EECA, and Latin America were organised to respond to the need for increased capacity upon transition away from Global Fund financing, and the impact of this on the sustainability of rights-based sex worker programming.

The Africa regional convening focused on influencing funding for sex worker-led organisations and monitoring Global Fund-supported programmes. The first regional convening in Asia and the Pacific invited participants from Cambodia, Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea and Viet Nam, which are not transition countries. While this was a valuable meeting as attendees were from countries that will receive small grants to implement national activities, NSWP and APNSW requested a reprogramming of funds from RCF to allow a further regional convening to take place on the topic of transition. This convening took place in November 2018, and was attended by fifteen participants from four countries.

Region	Place	Dates
Africa	Nairobi, Kenya	17–21 April
Asia and the Pacific	Bangkok, Thailand	18–19 June 15–17 November
Caribbean	Georgetown, Guyana	22–24 February
Eastern Europe and Central Asia (EECA)	Kiev, Ukraine	20–22 March
Latin America	Bogota, Colombia	15–17 March

The regional convenings in Latin America and Asia and the Pacific made use of support from the Senior Programme Officer in person, and in EECA he assisted via Skype to answer specific questions raised by the group. In the Caribbean, the regional convening focused on understanding the functions of the Global Fund, how to engage with the CCM, and transition.

In total, 53 sex workers attended the regional convenings (68 including the regional convening in Asia and the Pacific in November 2018, which was funded by RCF and attended by NSWPs' Senior Programme Officer).



National activities

Sex worker-led groups in 18 countries received small grants to implement a national programme of Global Fund-related activities including but not limited to: national workshops, meetings with key stakeholders and the creation of key population platforms. These countries are:

- **Asia and the Pacific:** Mongolia, Nepal, PNG, Viet Nam
- **Africa:** Kenya, South Sudan, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Democratic Republic of Congo, Rwanda, Senegal
- **EECA:** Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, Ukraine
- **Latin America:** Colombia, Ecuador
- **Caribbean:** Guyana, Suriname.

A table of all national activities carried out in 2018 can be found as an appendix at the end of this document.

Technical support

During 2018, 27 countries were offered technical support from NSW's Senior Programme Officer, regional networks and Community Experts.

In 2018, NSW's Senior Programme Officer provided on-site technical support in five countries (Colombia, Georgia, Rwanda, South Sudan and Thailand). The Senior Programme Officer, regional networks and Community Experts provided remote technical support to all 27 countries in the programme over the course of the year. The Senior Programme Officer, regional networks and Community Experts supported sex worker-led organisations with activities such as reviewing transition plans, providing documentation on Global Fund mechanisms, one-to-one and small group mentoring on engaging with the Global Fund, and providing contacts within the Global Fund and CCMs.

The Senior Programme Officer also produced and disseminated 29 country profile documents outlining the country context, the Global Fund grants being implemented in the country and the contact details of CCM members. Throughout the year he provided 4 Quarterly Updates on Global Fund activities⁴, which were shared with NSW members and are available on NSW's website. The Quarterly Global Fund Updates provided NSW members (260 sex worker organisations in 80 countries as of 31 December 2018) with up-to-date information on recent developments within the Global Fund.

Region	Community Experts
Africa	Phelister Abdalla and Lala Maty Sow
Asia and the Pacific	Kay Thi Win and Liana Andriyani
Caribbean	Miriam Edwards
EECA	Nataliia Isaieva and Staša Plečaš
Latin America	Karina Bravo

Miriam Edwards sits on the CCM in Guyana and the Regional Coordinating Mechanism representing sex workers, and Nataliia Isaieva has been elected as a sex worker representative on the CCM in Ukraine.

Three specific NSW resources were made available to sex worker-led organisations and community experts involved in the programme. The Smart Sex Worker's Guide to The Global Fund⁵ and Smart Guide: Sex Worker's and Drug User's Guide to the Global Fund Transition⁶ were published in 2015, and The Smart Sex Worker's Guide to the Global Fund Strategy 2017–2022: "Investing to End Epidemics"⁷ was published in 2017. They are available in Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish on the NSW website. Sex workers also made use of the Sex Worker Implementation Tool (SWIT) and the Smart Sex Worker's Guide to the SWIT⁸ among other resources.

4 NSW, 2018, [Global Fund Quarterly Update 1](#), [Global Fund Quarterly Update 2](#), [Global Fund Quarterly Update 3](#), [Global Fund Quarterly Update 4](#)

5 NSW, 2015, [The Smart Sex Worker's Guide to The Global Fund](#)

6 NSW, 2015, [Smart Guide: Sex Worker's and Drug User's Guide to the Global Fund Transition](#)

7 NSW, 2017, [The Smart Sex Worker's Guide to the Global Fund Strategy 2017–2022: "Investing to End Epidemics"](#)

8 NSW, 2015, [Smart Sex Worker's Guide to the SWIT](#)



FINDINGS

Increased knowledge and understanding of Global Fund and national processes at a regional level

The technical support provided by NSW's Senior Programme Officer as well as the regional convenings provided information on engaging with Global Fund and national processes and allowed regional networks to build their capacity in providing technical support to sex worker-led organisations in their regions.

Participants at the regional convenings agreed that the combination of community knowledge and technical support from the Senior Programme Officer and the Community Experts was helpful, as this allowed them to contextualise the Global Fund's work to their particular country context.

“It was a very important event; it was very successful. It was a very flexible agenda where we gave them a space to discuss what kind of issues they face in implementing GF programmes. She was really facilitating well, knowing the Global Fund processes, but also having the insights where the countries are, so she initiated this discussion about participation in [Global Fund] processes and went through all the steps [of] how they can participate and access the Global Fund in their countries.”

Programme Officer, SWAN (EECA)

“[The technical support] had a great impact, especially in Suriname, because now they better understand the importance of them representing themselves at the CCM level – before they didn't see it as something important.”

Community Expert, Caribbean

The Asia and the Pacific regional convening was the first time representatives from all five countries came together. Participants reported it was a valuable experience as they were able to share a lot of information, discuss their experiences engaging with the Global Fund, and learn from each other in a face-to-face environment. Shortly before the meeting, a participant from Mongolia received a letter from the sex worker representative on the CCM, trying to improve work on rights-based programming in Mongolia, as they are a transition country. Participants reflected on this during the convening and suggested approaches for the country – this issue is relevant (or soon will be) to all participants developing approaches to transition.

This increased understanding has allowed regional networks and Community Experts to build their capacity to provide support at a national level on the Global Fund and other national processes. By providing information and support to organisations, the programme can support sex workers to improve their knowledge at a national level and meaningfully engage with the Global Fund. Without an awareness of the processes and activities this cannot happen.

Increased knowledge and understanding of Global Fund and national processes at a national level

Further to the regional convenings mentioned above, the technical support provided by NSW's Senior Programme Officer, regional networks and Community Experts, as well as national activities, increased the knowledge and understanding of Global Fund by sex worker-led organisations at a national level. 18 countries received small grants to carry out these national activities. Some countries undertook activities to build or strengthen their knowledge of the Global Fund, its processes and its work, and some focused activities on engaging with Global Fund and national processes.



Suriname reported that the country profile they received has helped them gain an understanding of the Global Fund and its role and will have a lasting impact in their work.

“Mick sent out country profiles, on Jamaica, Guyana and Suriname, so these countries now better understand [how it works]. They started sharing more information, through the training with the sex worker coalition through NSWP, their capacity was more built on the CCM. Now they’ve started asking questions and getting information on the Global Fund, which they had no information on before... Now there is a sex worker representative in the CCM.”

Community Expert, Caribbean

National focal points in all regions share information with sex workers in their countries for use in various ways. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, the national focal point shared the DRC country profile with their members, and used the resources provided (country profiles and Smart Guides) as part of their national activities. They reported that knowledge gained from technical support was also useful in the discussions held between sex worker-led organisations in the country and CCM members, to hold them accountable for informing sex worker-led organisations. In Senegal, the national focal point and African Community Expert shared the country profile in French with participants during national activities, and facilitated several national activities as part of her on-site technical support to the Francophone African countries involved in the programme (DRC, Rwanda and Senegal).

In Latin America, sex worker-led organisations in Ecuador used the country profile to organise around the Global Fund schedule, and be able to contact staff visiting the country. They also shared this information with other groups including the national network of people who use drugs, so they could be prepared and informed.

In EECA, the national focal point in Kazakhstan shared information and materials she received from NSWPs' Senior Programme Officer with sex workers and partners who are actively involved in Global Fund processes.

The national focal point in Rwanda used the country profile she received to contact a member of the CCM; she also shared information from the country profile during national workshops. The group shared the information widely and translated the country profile into Kinyarwanda. They also carried out a study to map the Global Fund services available to sex workers in Rwanda, and identify current gaps in provision.

In Rwanda, the national workshop was attended by 13 sex workers, and led to an improved understanding of and confidence in engaging with these processes at a national level.

“From the [national] training, there has been a significant shift in attitudes and confidence. Gone is the fear about contacting the CCM and government officials, such as the lead person on the Rwandan Strategic Health Plan development process... something that did not happen prior to the training.”

Senior Programme Officer, NSWPs

In Kyrgyzstan, Tais Plus used part of their small grant to translate and adapt existing documents they saw as helpful in gaining a better understanding of the Global Fund, including information on contacting the Office of the Inspector General, the CCM and the process of country dialogue. Country profiles for Ecuador and Colombia were also translated into Spanish to facilitate broader reach in those countries.



Meaningful engagement in Global Fund national processes

Some countries used their national grant and their existing knowledge to engage more meaningfully in Global Fund processes through conducting community consultations, or advocacy activities with stakeholders relevant to Global Fund processes.

In the Caribbean, the Community Expert is able to use her position on the RCM and CCM to build the capacity of sex workers at a national level:

“I sit on the Regional Coordinating Mechanism and also the Guyana CCM – they have a lot of consultation which I am a part of, and the countries that don’t have people [sex worker representatives] on the CCM through the RCM, I am able to bring [their] experiences to the table.”

Community Expert, Caribbean

In Rwanda, the skills gained during the national workshop have improved sex workers’ understanding of how the CCM works and how sex workers can engage with the Global Fund:

“Before the training it was hard to know who was on the CCM, everything about the Global Fund. But after getting the information, we thought we need to make the next step now, we need to get to the CCM. Now is the time to move forward with the skills that we are getting from NSWP.”

National focal point, Rwanda

The Regional Community Expert for Asia and the Pacific reported that generally, sex worker-led organisations had very little experience of the CCM representative selection process before the programme, and that NSWP’s Senior Programme Officer was able to provide technical assistance enabling them to more effectively engage with the CCM during 2018. Before the programme, Papua New Guinea had a sex worker observer to the CCM; since they received technical support they have two sex worker representatives on the CCM. There had previously been a key populations budget for HIV testing in the country, but no specific budget for HIV testing among sex workers. This was raised during the national activity meeting, which was attended by several CCM members, and they have now introduced a specific budget for sex worker provision.

National workshop in Rwanda



© FADA



In Nepal, there was a sex worker representative on the CCM but both she and the community in the country were unclear about her role and how to effectively engage through the CCM. She attended the national training in Nepal and the regional convening in November, and now reports a much clearer understanding of her role and responsibilities at the CCM.

In countries where there is no sex worker representative on the CCM, the sex worker community has become much more involved in the process of engaging with the Global Fund and with the government following technical support and regional/national activities. For example, in Malaysia and Mongolia, the Community Expert reports that the sex worker community is now “much more aware” of how to engage with the government and the need for resource mobilisation post-transition.

In Colombia, sex workers attended a meeting with government and principal recipients of a Global Fund grant for violence and HIV. They were meaningfully engaged as experts on the different legal models of sex work and the impact this has on violence. In Ecuador, following a meeting on transition, sex worker-led organisations highlighted that government health services funded by the Global Fund were only available to cisgender female sex workers. The services have now changed their policies to provide services to transgender sex workers as well.

“Before we didn’t know anything, we were far away from the process and didn’t participate... now every population has its representative... and we’re not just working on health, but human rights, violence, so many topics, and how these all interact with each other.”

Community Expert, Latin America

In El Salvador, a sex worker representative from PLAPERTS was elected to the CCM in 2018 and noticed sex worker-led organisations now enjoy more contact and communication with Global Fund staff. They are now planning to work more closely with networks of people who use drugs, to support them in electing a community representative to the CCM.

In 2018, the Mongolian government translated the full SWIT to use as part of their strategic plan, and The Smart Sex Worker’s Guide to SWIT was also translated into Mongolian for use among sex worker-led organisations. The Community Expert in the region reported these resources are being used in other countries by sex workers who are engaging with the Global Fund, particularly in Myanmar, but they could be used more widely and more effectively if there were resources to translate them into more local languages.

NSWP’s Senior Programme Officer provided online technical support to Tais Plus (Kyrgyzstan) regarding issues in management of the Global Fund grant in the country between UNDP as Principle Recipient and Tais Plus, a sex worker-led organisation who is a sub-recipient of the grant. The support related to allocation of grant funding for staff wages. NSWPs’ Senior Programme Officer facilitated a dialogue (currently ongoing) between Tais Plus and the Fund Portfolio Manager which led to a positive resolution of the issue.

In Kyrgyzstan and Ukraine, significant steps have been made in terms of understanding Global Fund and national processes:

“In Kyrgyzstan they’ve really invested a lot in the capacities for more and more people to nominate themselves for the CCM, because they were struggling, people didn’t want to nominate... Now they have many activists that are nominating themselves and engaging in the processes.”

Program Officer, SWAN (ECCA)



Sex workers from Kazakhstan attended the ECCA regional convening and improved their capacity to engage with the Global Fund. A few months later they elected a sex worker representative to the CCM, who also received further technical support from NSWP's Senior Programme Officer for the role.

In Ukraine, sex workers are involved in all 6 working groups developing the new concept note to the Global Fund; these groups focus on: reducing new HIV infections; mobilising communities, gender and human rights; effective HIV treatment; finances; monitoring and evaluation; and purchases. They also discussed CCM election procedures at a meeting of the All-Ukrainian Forum of Sex Workers, which led to the election of a national sex worker representative on the CCM:

“In Ukraine, talking with the community and having trainings on the Global Fund, and keeping this topic active, helped them be very productive, to be involved in these Working Groups for the new programme and the Concept Note very meaningfully. They said they were seen as experts. People from the community [now] have information on the Global Fund and they know how things can and should be done, so they could really meaningfully participate.”

Program Officer, SWAN (EECA)

NSWP's Senior Programme Officer and regional networks report that sex workers are now represented on the CCMs in 15 of the 27 focus countries (Cambodia, Colombia, Ecuador, El Salvador, Guyana, Jamaica, Kyrgyzstan, Kazakhstan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Nepal, Papua New Guinea, Peru, Thailand, Ukraine).

Use of resources

Sex worker-led organisations report making use of the three NSWP resources on the Global Fund (The Smart Sex Worker's Guide to The Global Fund; Smart Guide: Sex Worker's and Drug User's Guide to the Global Fund Transition; The Smart Sex Worker's Guide to the Global Fund Strategy 2017–2022: “Investing to End Epidemics”). These resources are available on the NSWP website in Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish, and in 2018 were accessed 387 times. However, the Senior Policy Officer reported that he feels the Smart Guides could be used more, and often reminded participants that they are available.

The 2018 NSWP member survey indicated that 58% of members participating in the survey had used the Smart Sex Worker's Guide to The Global Fund to inform their advocacy during the year, 47% had used the Smart Sex Worker's Guide to the Global Fund Strategy, and 43% had used the Smart Sex Worker's and Drug User's Guide to Global Fund Transition.

Sex workers in Suriname, Rwanda and Kazakhstan in particular highlighted the SWIT as a valuable resource. The SWIT was particularly useful for introducing the issue of sex workers' engagement with government institutions. In Suriname, sex workers used the SWIT in meetings with the Ministry of Health; it was helpful for providing a framework to advocate for their engagement, and explain their needs in the context of health and human rights.



Engagement with other key population networks

In 2018 many sex worker-led organisations strengthened relationships with other key populations groups working in their regions.

In Latin America, sex worker-led organisations are very engaged with CCMs, both through sex worker representatives and through work with other key population-led networks. The Senior Policy Officer introduced PLAPERTS (Latin American regional network) to LANPUD, a regional network of people who use drugs, and the Regional Coordinator was invited to participate in a meeting in Colombia where she shared her knowledge of engaging with the Global Fund. The Senior Programme Officer said “sharing experience would not have been possible before the NSWP training. It also enabled the strengthening of links between the two constituencies and further collaboration is currently being discussed.”

PLAPERTS was also invited to a meeting of the Latin American Caribbean Platform in Peru in June, which brought together participants implementing Global Fund activities. Sex worker-led organisations in the Latin America region now work closely with many of the key population representatives on the CCM, including the transgender, MSM and HIV representatives. In the absence of a dedicated representative, the sex worker community in Ecuador engages with organisations of people who use drugs and has regular contact with their CCM representative, which provides sex workers with an avenue to raise sex worker-related issues. These activities reflect PLAPERTS' increased engagement with other key populations in the region, and with Global Fund processes.

Global Fund Regional Convening in Latin America



© PLAPERTS



In Africa, the regional network noted that the formation of the Key Populations Consortium in Kenya was “critical” to responding to the challenges they faced with engaging in Global Fund processes. They report that key populations in Kenya have begun working together to respond to their needs collectively:

“... [the] KP Consortium has enhanced representation of all KPs as well as sex workers in the CCM and in the in-country dialogue and concept note writing and review processes. Sex worker led organizations are having an increased negotiation power in the in country Global Fund processes.”

Regional report, Africa

During 2018, Tais Plus worked with other key populations groups (people living with HIV, people who use drugs and LGBT people) in their Global Fund training, which they say opened up new possibilities for working together and increased solidarity.

“A big plus, when 4 communities come together, is the opportunity to think, and then act jointly.”

National report, Kyrgyzstan

SWAN reported that other key populations groups now approach Tais Plus in Kyrgyzstan for advice about engaging with the Global Fund.

“They obviously have the knowledge and other communities know this, so they turn to them [Tais Plus] before taking any further steps. They ask them for advice.”

Community Expert, Europe

Following participation in the programme in Georgia, Women for Freedom included advocacy goals related to the Global Fund in their organisational strategic plan, indicating intention for future engagement. They did not succeed in electing a sex worker representative to the CCM but there is now a sex worker observer who will attend meetings.

“In Georgia they also tried but didn't succeed [in electing a sex worker], but now they receive information on the work of the CCM and they also participate in the meetings without the right to vote.”

Program Officer, SWAN (EECA)

National workshop in Georgia



© SWAN



During 2018, APNSW worked with groups of people who use drugs, transgender people, people living with HIV, and (to a lesser extent) men who have sex with men. The Community Expert reported that other national organisations were doing the same; in Papua New Guinea, Viet Nam and Myanmar, meetings were held involving all main key populations groups.

The Philippines Sex Worker Collective received technical support around issues of access to services among migrant and indigenous sex workers and were provided with key contact information. Although no immediate solution was found, the Philippines Sex Worker Collective, Zeiteng and Project X (two organisations in the country working with indigenous groups around sexual health) have decided to collaborate to seek solutions.

The activities undertaken as part of this programme have improved the knowledge and understanding of the Global Fund at a national level, and enhanced sex workers' ability to engage in Global Fund national processes. This includes influencing funding proposals and implementation and monitoring of Global Fund financing. There has been an increase of engagement with CCMs during this programme, and an increase in the number of sex worker representatives on CCMs. The sex workers who have participated in our activities have been able to consult with both the wider sex worker community and other key populations groups as part of their activities, and can meaningfully engage on behalf of their communities to identify priorities and needs.

Challenges

Varying levels of knowledge on the Global Fund

Seven countries had not implemented national activities before as part of the previous Global Fund RCF grant (2015–2017): Cambodia, Colombia, Mongolia, Rwanda, South Sudan, Suriname, Zimbabwe. These countries began by holding a national workshop to build their knowledge on the Global Fund and its processes.

In Senegal, two workshops were held in order to reach a greater number of sex workers outside of the capital: one workshop was attended mainly by sex workers from Dakar and the surrounding area, and a second workshop was held in the Sédhiou region of Senegal. This was also raised a concern in Kenya, with the national organisation highlighting many sex worker-led organisations in more remote areas were “deeply unaware of Global Fund processes in their counties” and that this was “really limit[ing] their participation in the necessary decision-making platforms at a local level”.

Perception of Global Fund participation

Several participants in the programme and the Senior Programme Officer said they believe a barrier to increased engagement by sex workers is the perception that the processes are ‘not for them’, either they are not open to them as non-representatives, or the mechanisms are a hostile environment for them as sex workers. They emphasised that changing this perception has begun through the workshops, but it will take long-term investment in capacity building to change this perception in a meaningful way.

“Many activities the Global Fund provides are funded to reach the community, and sex workers don’t even realise they are funded for them.”

National focal point, Rwanda



In ECCA, participation in NSWPs' programme has helped to partially change this perception:

“We found out [through the regional convening] for example, in Georgia and Kazakhstan they didn't even know that they had the right to participate in the CCM meetings [if] they are not part of the CCM.”

Programme Officer, SWAN (ECCA)

The Community Expert for the Caribbean highlighted a remaining challenge: encouraging sex workers to be vocal during meetings with the Global Fund:

“Sometimes we're there, but not always heard. You have to be kind of aggressive, as sometimes you could just sit there and just be in a seat taking up space. This is something we put in the training now, that people who are going to be [in meetings] representing us, they must be able to speak, and get their voice across.”

Community Expert, Caribbean

Lack of accountability to key population communities

The Community Expert in Asia and the Pacific reported that often not much consultation occurs when selecting sex worker representatives for the region, and that the announcement of new representatives does not reach many sex workers in the country:

“In some countries they announce who is the rep for people living with HIV, but for sex workers they don't announce who it is, or if they do, it's only within people already on the CCM, UN level... this excludes [many] sex workers.”

Community Expert, Asia and the Pacific

National activities allowed participants to reflect on this and explore options to increase the accountability of CCM members towards their community.

Stigma and discrimination

All sex workers who were interviewed highlighted that stigma and discrimination were the biggest challenge to their continued participation in Global Fund processes in their country or region.

“Sex work is not legal here, but it does not mean sex workers are not Rwandans, are not citizens.”

National focal point, Rwanda

In Rwanda, FADA, the national sex worker organisation, reported they have begun to try to work with other key population networks, including people who use drugs, but that stigma against both sex workers and other key population groups makes this difficult.

“We have tried to work with an organisation for people who inject drugs, but there is so much stigma around this in Rwanda they have to remain underground...sex work is illegal but this is even more illegal, they risk detention, beatings, prison. There is a lot of stigma against sex workers and LGBT people. We are uncared citizens.”

National focal point, Rwanda

For some, institutionalised stigma means there are still barriers to participating in Global Fund meetings with government.

“Some of it [remaining challenges] is still insecurity around knowledge, information and how to properly engage, but there's also a lot of problems that are related to the CCMs in country... It's very hard to understand what's going on in-country when you're outside of it, even if you read the reports, so I can understand the level of intimidation, or how sex workers might feel intimidated going into a CCM meeting.”

Community Expert, Europe



This was also raised as a potential future barrier to sex workers engaging with Global Fund and related processes in Latin America:

“Sometimes sex workers are repressed, and they don’t want to participate because they are afraid.”

Community Expert, Latin America

Some participants are concerned about the impact stigma towards sex workers will have on financing for sex worker-led programmes after transition away from Global Fund financing. As sex work is criminalised in most countries, some organisations’ believe the government is unlikely to fund programmes by and for sex workers to the necessary degree.

Working with governments (national and local), and institutions that work closely with governments, is a serious concern for sex workers, due to stigma and criminalisation of sex work. In the Democratic Republic of Congo, sex workers reported that the workshop was helpful, but afterwards sex workers raised concerns about future work with the government while sex workers are so vulnerable in the country. Recently there was large-scale arrests and detention of sex workers and other young women⁹, and sex workers are wary about engaging with the government in meetings on the Global Fund. Lala Maty Sow, one of two Community Experts in Africa, said this was the biggest challenge for future work, as sex workers in some countries in the region, particularly in Rwanda and DRC, are scared to engage in discussions with the government in case they are arrested or detained.

Language barriers

The national focal point for Rwanda explained that language barriers were a concern for her in terms of sex workers’ capacity to participate in this programme. She reported that increased resources for their particular translation needs would mean they could run the workshop again with twice as many participants. She made efforts to overcome this by explaining key messages from the workshops in local languages, but this cannot replicate the opportunity to attend and engage fully in Global Fund processes.

NSWP publishes in five core languages (Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish), and tries to ensure language used in documentation and written and verbal communication is in plain English, so that it can be easily translated at a local level. In early 2018, the Global Fund removed its webpages in Spanish and Russian, making it more difficult for sex worker-led groups and Community Experts to look for information relating to the Global Fund. In the second semester of 2018, it also became apparent that some of the information (for example, lists of CCM members) on the Global Fund website was not up-to-date or complete.

Barriers to working with the community

APNSW, ASWA, CSWC and SWAN all agreed that as regional networks the burden of reporting to the principal recipient is difficult to balance with the need to provide technical support to national groups on these same challenges. The demands placed on community organisations by the principal recipients are high, and this creates additional barriers for the sex worker community. For example, APNSW as the regional network had the capacity to engage with the Global Fund reporting requirements and suggest changes for future reporting, which is not possible for many smaller organisations in the region.

⁹ NSWP, 2018, [NSWP denounces the harassment, arrests and detention of sex workers in DRC](#)



In contrast, organisations that meet the requirements and have the capacity to deliver Global Fund projects may not always adequately consult and engage with sex workers. The Community Expert in Asia and the Pacific praised the Global Fund's policy of requiring organisations to involve sex workers, but suggested they should involve sex workers in monitoring the implementation of this policy:

“For example, last week I had a meeting with the principal recipient of our grant, and they [said] ‘we are doing capacity building’. I said ‘you are doing capacity building the other way round [to] what we want. What we [APNSW] do is capacity building, we ask our members, we ask our partners what they need, what we can do to help, [and] based on that we support them. But you are saying “you [sex workers] need this, you have to do this...””

Community Expert, Asia and the Pacific

The Community Expert in Senegal highlighted that despite progress engaging in Global Fund processes, sex worker-led organisations have been contracted as sub-sub-recipients for ten years and still find it difficult to become sub-recipients.

“We have made progress with the authorities in charge of Global Fund activities, the sex worker associations have been sub-sub-recipients for 10 years. Despite this, the Principal Recipients believe that we do not fulfil the conditions that can make us apply as sub-recipients, even though we already have the capacity to manage external funds.”

Community Expert, Senegal

LESSONS

Impact takes time

While sex workers reported that the programme had improved their capacity to understand and engage with the Global Fund, many emphasised that the process of embedding knowledge, understanding and skills takes time.

“When considering impact, it is not always as straightforward as a seat on the CCM. Much of the impact is less visible and relates to building confidence and skills and understanding of Global Fund processes. The training workshops clarify many things about the Global Fund that was not understood before. And because the information is delivered in a very down to earth, practical way, sex workers feel empowered to question more, doing so from a position of understanding. It is in this area that the real impact can be seen, although it is hard to measure and evaluate.”

Senior Programme Officer, NSWSP

“It’s going slowly, it’s small steps – sometimes when you put them in the report it doesn’t seem very meaningful, but for them, it’s very important to have this programme and this project because it allows them to keep talking about Global Fund processes with the community. It works on 2 levels. They say it’s very important to talk about Global Fund among the community in general, but on the second level it helps them build the capacities of leaders, for possible advocates, for people from the community that can be engaged in Global Fund processes in their country in future.”

Program Officer, SWAN (EECA)



NSWP model

NSWP's capacity development programme has been designed in conjunction with the regions we work with, with each activity contributing to the overall outcome of improved engagement with Global Fund processes. The global meeting in November 2017 capitalised on the expertise of NSWPs' Senior Programme Officer to further build capacity of Community Experts, who had been trained previously to provide technical support. National organisations make use of technical support from Community Experts to implement national activities, which improves sex workers' capacity to engage with the Global Fund in their countries. Additionally, the national activities inform the topics that regional networks advocate for at both a regional and global level.

Key factors for success included the structure of technical support, as the peer-to-peer element combined with the technical knowledge of the Senior Programme Officer created an effective learning environment for sex workers.

NSWP has been able to provide a unique model that institutional partners are unable to offer. The programme is sex worker-led, creating conditions for effective and safe learning from each other and from experts on the Global Fund. Participants in all five regions highlighted this model as particularly effective:

“I can't wait to do my [2019] workshop. One of the things now I'm seeing is there are so many sex workers who want to take part in these workshops... it's bringing us together now. I wish we could get programmes all the time to keep sex workers going. For the first time, we're feeling united.”

National focal point and new sex worker representative on the CCM, Suriname

Looking ahead

The scale of Global Fund processes is still a major consideration for sex workers, and participants acknowledged that any capacity development will take time to embed within the community.

“I think it's just so big and so complex that it'll take more effort in terms of capacity building in country. It's not very straightforward in terms of understanding where you can engage and how.”

Community Expert, Europe

Within NSWPs, internal mechanisms for reporting could have been more effective in terms of ease of collecting data. As part of a meeting of the Sex Worker Networks Consortium in 2019, representatives from the five regions discussed changes to be implemented in 2019 to address this. NSWPs and its regional partners will move to monthly reporting on activities and six-monthly reporting on outcome level – determining whether sex worker-led organisations in-country have increased knowledge on Global Fund processes, whether consultations are held within the countries to inform these processes, and whether sex worker-led organisations are involved in the country dialogue and concept note development.



RECOMMENDATIONS

The engagement of sex worker-led organisations in Global Fund processes could be improved by:

- Engaging sex worker-led organisations in combating widespread stigma and discrimination amongst stakeholders including Global Fund staff. This could involve sensitivity training or capacity building on the SWIT. Similarly, engagement could be improved by ensuring national governments have in place non-discrimination/equal access policies working to improve access for sex workers and other key populations;
- Encouraging national governments, where appropriate and suitable contracting mechanisms exist, to engage sex worker-led organisations in data collection to enhance their disease response, and improve budgeting for rights-based sex worker-led programmes;
- Supporting global key population-led networks in continuing their technical assistance programmes to build capacity, knowledge and skills (related to the Global Fund and rights-based programming) and ensure knowledge continues cascade out to the wider community;
- Supporting programmes that build on the skills and knowledge gained from this programme to increase sex worker-led advocacy towards removing punitive laws and criminalisation of sex work;
- Encouraging the Community, Rights & Gender Special Initiative to share advocacy tools developed by key population-led networks on the Global Fund communication platforms, and to support these being accessed by a wider audience of people working with key populations.

CONCLUSIONS

This programme has created new opportunities for sex workers to learn from each other, improving their capacity to engage with Global Fund processes in their countries. Sex worker-led organisations in all five regions have engaged with other key population networks and have formed new working relationships to undertake further activities in 2019.

This case study shows the value of investing in building capacity among sex worker-led organisations. Building the capacity of sex workers, many of whom have little or no knowledge of the Global Fund, takes time. Regional convenings, technical support, and national activities, increased understanding of Global Fund processes by sex worker-led organisations at a national level. This knowledge allows for a clearer understanding of the roles of different stakeholders in relation to sex worker-led organisations. It also clarifies stakeholders' responsibilities to consult with sex worker-led organisations in their countries (in Global Fund processes and processes that influence it such as national strategic planning). Building capacity of sex workers, meaningfully consulting with sex worker-led organisations, and involving them in national processes, ensures the CCM achieves its role in responding to the three diseases in-country.



ANNEX 1:

ALL 2018 NATIONAL ACTIVITIES

In total, 480 people attended or participated in national activities as part of this programme in 2018.

Region	Country	Activities	No. of attendees
Africa	DRC	National workshop, Engaging with national stakeholders	24, 22
	Kenya	National workshop, Engaging with national stakeholders, Monitoring grant implementation	12, 12, 11
	Rwanda	National workshop, Sex worker survey	13, 50
	Senegal	Workshop (Dakar), Workshop (Sédhiou)	19, 17
	South Sudan	National workshop, Monitoring grant implementation	12, 11
	Tanzania	National workshop, Monitoring grant implementation	10, 12
	Zimbabwe	National workshop, Monitoring grant implementation	21, 12
Asia and the Pacific	Mongolia	National sex worker convening	20
	Nepal	National sex worker convening	10
	Papua New Guinea	National sex worker convening	21
	Viet Nam	National sex worker convening	21
Caribbean	Guyana	National sex worker convening, Engaging with national stakeholders – influencing national strategic plan, National key population convening	21, 25, 18
	Suriname	National workshop, Engaging with national stakeholders – influencing national strategic plan, national key population convening	18, 32, 14
Eastern Europe and Central Asia	Georgia	Community consultations 1 2 and 3, Workshop for Western Georgia, national workshop	11, 12, 10, 11, 10
	Kyrgyzstan	Key population workshop, Community consultations 1, 2 and 3 Translate/adapt Global Fund document; National workshop	14, 16, 17
	Ukraine	Community consultations, Participation in developing the concept note, national convening	70, 22
Latin America	Colombia	National workshop, Engaging with national stakeholders	12, 10
	Ecuador	National workshop, Engaging with national stakeholders	14, 14

The Global Network of Sex Work Projects uses a methodology that ensures the voices of sex worker-led organisations are made visible. Case studies examine the strategies, activities and impact at global, regional and national levels of NSWP and regional sex worker-led networks in consultation with NSWP members. Case studies are based on ongoing monitoring, utilising internal reports, in-depth interviews, and site visits.

The term 'sex workers' reflects the immense diversity within the sex worker community including but not limited to: female, male and transgender sex workers; lesbian, gay and bi-sexual sex workers; male sex workers who identify as heterosexual; sex workers living with HIV and other diseases; sex workers who use drugs; young adult sex workers (between the ages of 18 and 29 years old); documented and undocumented migrant sex workers, as well as and displaced persons and refugees; sex workers living in both urban and rural areas; disabled sex workers; and sex workers who have been detained or incarcerated.



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NSWP is a private not-for-profit limited company.
Company No. SC349355

This case study was developed with funding support from the Global Fund Community, Rights and Gender Strategic Initiative (GF CRG SI) Project.