



24th September 2013

We the African Sex Workers Alliance (ASWA), a sex worker-led organization run by and for sex workers in Africa, stand firmly against the radical move by former sex workers and campaigners in the Global North to protest against the decriminalization of sex workers, including third parties such as our partners, employees, and clients.

While we condemn trafficking and sexual exploitation of children and vulnerable women and other populations, we are firm in our position the sex work is work, and is engaged by consenting adults, and the decriminalization of sex work and sex workers.

We acknowledge that trafficking exists. This often occurs in countries and cities where sex work is highly criminalized and women are not empowered, thus rendering them vulnerable. Decriminalization will allow sex workers to be self-regulating, and thus empower sex workers to combat exploitation and trafficking. In addition we would like to point out that one of the Millennium Development Goal's is to fight poverty. The criminalization of sex work will lead to massive unemployment with in various societies and communities. Sex work is a form of labor, with very large percentages of society depending on sex work, either directly or indirectly. This is especially the case as many women who would otherwise live in poverty support themselves and their families through sex work: those who seek to further criminalize those women have no suggestions for replacing their income.

In Africa, sex workers are condemned in public by society and are easy targets for abuse, harassments and even murder. This is due to lack of policies in place to protect the men and women who sell or trade sex. .

Decriminalization will ensure that there are systems in place that protect the people in the industry from perpetrators of abuse. Decriminalization would ensure that sex workers are empowered, and enabled to realize their human rights and legal services from the government. This not only leading to the full realization of human rights from sex workers but a decrease in violence against women and other vulnerable populations such as transgender people and male sex workers.

As such, we stand with UNAIDS, UNDP, the WHO, the UNFPA and NSWP in rejecting this new campaign that seeks to further criminalize us. Criminalization makes us more marginalized and unsafe. The African Sex Workers Alliance is proud to stand with these international agencies, and sex worker-led projects around the world in calling for decriminalization.