

# ANNUAL REPORT

# 2023



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## ANNUAL REPORT

RESTORE, REVAMP, AND MAINTAIN: A  
PROMISING WALK TO SUSTAINABILITY



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# Message from the Executive Director |



*“We have also made significant progress in our 5-year sustainability plan 2024-2028, which includes the purchase of 24 Acres of land in Luwero district and 29 decimal lands in Mengo Kampala-City. These acquisitions mark the beginning of the establishment of AWAC sustainability Hub of Holistic Transformation (HHoT).”*

Dear Esteemed Partners and Friends,

Over the years, the Alliance of Women Advocating for Change (AWAC) has not only strengthened and transformed a resilient grassroots sex work movement in Uganda, it has similarly laid a groundwork and cornerstone for grassroots sex work leaders and human rights defenders who have embraced the call and expanded it across different regions of Uganda and for this we are absolutely appreciative. We have also made significant progress in our 5-year sustainability plan 2024-2028, which includes the purchase of 24 Acres of land in Luwero district and 29 decimal lands in Mengo Kampala-City. These acquisitions mark the beginning of the establishment of AWAC sustainability Hub of Holistic Transformation (HHoT).

This HHoT will provide AWAC with a centre of excellence, physical space for programs, safe space and supportive environment where sex workers with multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities can access essential SRHR services, including healthcare, counselling, legal support, economic empowerment-skilling sessions, solidarity/feminist sisterhood and enhance mental health and wellbeing for continuity of integrated health services; safety and security. It will also be a place where

grassroots sex work leaders and human rights defenders can come together for nurturing, mentorship, inspiration, learning, collaborations, strengthening grassroots leadership, coordination and movement building.

Our commitment to grassroots organizing and movement building has been unwavering. We believe that lasting change comes from the bottom up, and we have seen the impact of our work in the expansion of the grassroots sex work movement across different regions of Uganda. Grassroots leaders and human rights defenders have embraced our call and taken it to new heights, and we are incredibly grateful for their dedication and hard work.

As we look to the future, we are excited about the potential for continued growth and impact. We have experienced extraordinary growth, innovation, and learning, but we also recognize the challenging realities that we faced, such as the threat of eviction of AWAC Kampala Drop-in Centre (DiC).

Throughout the year, we received priceless insights, support and guidance on matters of how AWAC can ably sustain herself through her Hub of Holistic Transformation (HHoT) development vision. We further reviewed our 5-year strategic plan—which will guide our journey in the next five years 2024-2028. The Strategic plan projects occupied positions of the two Deputy Executive Directors, a Management Team – comprised of Directors and Managers. The plan also envisages the offices of the Directors to head

the Directorates that support the Planning, design, implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation of AWAC's 5 Domains of Change and Programs of Work.

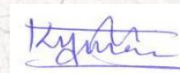
We have undertaken a number of advocacy and service delivery activities aimed at ensuring sex workers free from any form of violations including gender-based violence (GBV), sexual, and physical violence as well as socio-economic inequality and have access to responsive and integrated Universal Health Care services tailored to their unique needs. AWAC has amplified grassroots voices for over 32,000 grassroots sex workers with multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities through impactful grassroots advocacy. We held a national SRHR advocacy community rally, the very first-time green wave solidarity action on prevention of unsafe abortions, led by sex workers with feminist organizations, and other human rights organizations in the civil society fraternity in Africa. We have continued to grow to expand our advocacy reach including at the regional level where we have participated in engagements such as the recent 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and People's Right (ACHPR) –that took place in Arusha, Tanzania. AWAC has further expanded her program portfolio with newest focus directed to nexus of climate, SRHR and GBV. The organization finalized the formalization of the Community Health and Livelihoods Enhancement Groups (CHLEGs) SACCO with Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) --the first Sex Workers' SACCO established in Uganda. The CHLEGs are now spread across the country with the four newest being in Humanitarian settings specifically; Madi Okollo, and transit routes specifically Kassanda and Mubende districts. AWAC together with other community actors also developed a community innovative model which is; Community Actors for HIV Plus (CAHIV PLUS). The first model to a focus on public health emergencies beyond HIV. This integrated in SRHR, GBV, mental health, and economic empowerment during

the Ebola response in late 2022 and early 2023. This was to address the aftermath effects of the Ebola epidemic in Uganda.

We are now more focused on strengthening AWAC's institutional capacity and functional efficiency to effectively deliver through strengthening our management, creating formidable partnerships, sensitizing, and capacitating our grassroots members on human rights, transformation leadership, empowerment and social accountability approaches at grassroots, subnational, and national level. All this would not be possible without the support system of all our Grassroot Members, Staff, Board Members, Trustees, Development Partners and Donors in their various categories.

AWAC committed to remain true to her Vision. We believe our remarkable work will show the tremendous transformation achieved in the sex work community in Uganda and Africa at large.

Yours Sincerely,



.....  
Humble Kyomya Macklean



*“We continued strengthening our grassroots members with multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities with different capacities including leadership and advocacy as well as giving them access to health services that cater to their unique needs. Our geographical coverage has moved 10 Districts up making coverage and presence grow to 57 Districts in Uganda. Our movement developed a new compass, the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan that will guide our direction towards the vision... AWAC has also secured a new home for our secretariat headquarters in Mengo and for our HOTT in Luwero.”*

Dear Friends and Colleagues,

I have the immense privilege to present to you the AWAC Annual Report for the year 2023. You are going to embark on a journey that details an extraordinary story of milestones we have accomplished. Regardless of the fact that 2023 presented our organization with some of the most formidable challenges we have ever faced to date, AWAC yet again got to demonstrate her grit and fortitude overcoming those hurdles.

The year 2023 was defined by a rapid increase in terms of our reach and impact in Uganda and beyond. We continued strengthening our grassroots members with multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities with different capacities including leadership and advocacy as well as giving them access to health services that cater to their unique needs. Our geographical coverage has moved 10 Districts up making coverage and presence grow to 57 Districts in Uganda. Our movement developed a new compass, the 2024-2028 Strategic Plan that will guide our direction towards the vision where “Female Sex Workers Free from Human Rights Abuse and Living Healthy, Fulfilled and Productive Lives”. This process was

remarkably meticulous involving comprehensive consultation of our grassroots members, staff, board and partners to produce a documents our collective aspirations. This year was marked with a significant milestone, buying our land for the Hub of Holistic Transformation (HOTT) in Luwero.

Our story in 2023 was not without its villains who threatened a happy ending. With the enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act and

shrinking civic space, AWAC faced a number of security threats which necessitated more security beefing at our premises and capacity strengthening of staff. As if that was not enough, AWAC was dealt a devastating blow when we were served with an eviction notice from our Drop-In Centre. Despite the perilous situation through rigorous fundraising and support from donors as well as generous well-wishers to whom we are truly grateful, we have secured great land for our Secretariat not far from where were evicted. Nevertheless, this journey continues as we lobby resources to build on the land.

The Board continued to give strategic oversight to the organization meeting 4 times and once more during our emergency crisis to pave the way forward following our eviction.

My deepest thanks goes to all the members, partners that were part of this journey. My heartfelt gratitude also goes to our generous development partners, for continuously supporting our work through and through. I also extend my appreciation to my fellow board members for the resilience and oversight to the organization until the expiry of some of their terms, wishing the current board all the best in their roles. Kudos and thanks to the Executive Director for her stewardship and every staff member of AWAC. Without their commitment, cooperation and dedication of all of you, our work and success would simply not be possible. Now that our course has been chartered, we look forward with much anticipation and ecstasy to winning more ground in securing a supportive policy and social environment that enables female sex workers to live free from human rights abuses whilst realising healthy and productive lives in Uganda.

Yours Sincerely,

**Patricia Kimera,**  
Chairperson, Board of Directors -- **Outgoing**

## Message from the Chairperson | Board of Directors-Incoming



*“I would like to acknowledge the terrific work of my predecessor, outgoing AWAC Board Chairperson Patricia Kimera. During her term, Patricia made AWAC a much more effective and efficient organization. Patricia led a refinement of AWAC's strategic plan, which will put the organization on a firm forward-looking path. I also thank the AWAC secretariat under the leadership of Kyomya Macklean whom have put the strategy and vision of the organization to reality most excellently in 2023 and always as you will discover in the following pages.”*

Our dear Partners, friends, and colleagues

I am honored to assume the role of Board Chairperson for AWAC for a 3-year term. I would like to use this column to give you an overview of the strategies that are setting the directions for AWAC.

I would like to acknowledge the great work of my predecessor, outgoing AWAC Board Chairperson Patricia Kimera. During her term, the Board of Directors made AWAC a much more effective and efficient organization. They led a refinement of AWAC's strategic plan, which puts the organization on a firm forward-looking path. I also thank the AWAC secretariat under the leadership of Kyomya Macklean whom have put the strategy and vision of the organization to reality most excellently in 2023 and always as you will discover in the following pages. The organization has experienced so much progress in 2023 institutionally and programmatically which makes me very eager to work in a strategic capacity to achieve more in the coming years. As the current Chairperson since December 2023, it has been my pleasure to work closely with, and learn from, the outgoing board and secretariat.

The AWAC strategic framework is built on five 'pillars': (1) equitable healthcare for FSWs, (2) strong and resilient FSW movement, (3) strong, vibrant and sustainable institution, (4) evidence generation and research and (5) contributing to the attainment of SDGs 1-10, 16 and 17.

Over the coming months, the AWAC staff and the Board will expand AWAC's activities in alignment with these directions. In a future column, I will look forward to updating you on the specific initiatives that AWAC is undertaking to advance these goals.

I look forward to the next 3 years. I thank you for your interest in and for your support of AWAC.”

Yours Sincerely,

**Owomugisha Bazare Immaculate**  
Chairperson, Board of Directors -- Incoming

# Acknowledgements

## Our Donors and Partners

In 2023, AWAC experienced significant accomplishments, which were made possible by the unwavering support of our Donors and Partners in both humanitarian and development contexts we have operated. We are immensely grateful for their exceptional support and remain dedicated to advancing the Female Sex Workers' (FSW) Movement in Uganda. Our commitment is focused on advocating for universal healthcare, human rights, and socioeconomic justice for female sex workers with multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities across Uganda.

We extend our heartfelt appreciation to the Donors and development Partners who played a crucial role in supporting our initiatives throughout the year. Your contributions have been instrumental in AWAC's progress and success. Special appreciation to the Donors and Partners below, with whom we have journeyed 2023 milestones (in their alphabetical order); .

- ✦ Akina Mama wa Africa
- ✦ African Women Development Fund (AWDF)
- ✦ American Jewish World Service (AJWS)
- ✦ Centre for Disease Control (CDC)
- ✦ Creating Resources through Empowerment and Action (CREA)
- ✦ Defend Defenders
- ✦ East Africa Sexual Health and Rights Initiative (UHAI EASHRI)
- ✦ Initiative Marianne/ Embassy of France to Uganda
- ✦ Grassroots FSW-Led organizations and groups
- ✦ Global Fund for Women (GFW)
- ✦ Infectious Disease Institute (IDI)
- ✦ Joint Medical Stores (JMS)
- ✦ Makerere University Joint Aids Program (MJAP)
- ✦ Makerere School of Public Health
- ✦ Medical Colleague of Wisconsin (MCW)
- ✦ PEPFAR
- ✦ Population Service International (PSI), Uganda
- ✦ Rakai Health Science Program (RHSP)
- ✦ SAAF
- ✦ SRHR Alliance Uganda
- ✦ TASO
- ✦ Women Probono Initiative (WPI)
- ✦ UNAIDS
- ✦ Uganda Harm Reduction Network (UHRN)
- ✦ Uganda Protestant Medical Bureau (UPMB)
- ✦ UNWOMEN

## Our Networks and Collaborations

Throughout 2023, we made substantial advances in our core strategic areas, enabling us to achieve significant milestones. These achievements were made possible through the collaborative efforts and



constructive relationships with a diverse range of partners, including individuals, organizations, platforms, coalitions, and consortia. We are truly excited about these partnerships and collaborations, as they have been essential to our progress.

Our partnerships and synergies have been key in driving our work forward, and we are grateful for the support and collaboration from all our partners. We look forward to continuing our joint efforts to further our mission and create positive impact for female sex workers in Uganda and beyond. Some of these networks and collaborations include;

- ✧ Cervical Cancer Consortium
  - ✧ Community Actors for HIV Plus (CAHIV Plus) through the Community Ebola Response and preparedness Programme
  - ✧ Count Me In under CREA
  - ✧ Coalition to Stop Maternal Mortality Due to Unsafe Abortion (CSMMUA)
  - ✧ MakeWay Programme
  - ✧ Uganda Key Population Consortium
- We Lead Programme

## **Government Institutions and Departments**

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During the year of 2022, we joined forces with and received diverse support from a number of Government Institutions --which was one of the enablers for AWAC to have a successful year. These are;

- ✧ The Ministry of Health, Uganda
- ✧ The Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development
- ✧ Health Facilities (Kisenyi Health Centre IV, Kiswa Health Centre III, Kawala Health Centre III, and Kitebi Health Centre III)

### **Wakiso District**

- ✧ Wakiso HCIV, TASO Entebbe, Entebbe Grade B.

### **Kampala District**

- ✧ Aids Information Centre, Kiswa Health Centre III, Kitebi Health Centre III, Kisenyi Health Centre IV, Kawala Health Centre III, Mengo Hospital, ISS Mulago, Kiruddu CDC, MARP Mulago

### **District Kyotera**

- ✧ Kalisizo Hospital, Kasali Health Centre III, Kabira Health Centre III, Kakuto HealthCentre IV, Mutukula Health Centre III, Kasasa Health Centre III, Kire Health Centre III, Kasensero, Health Centre II.

### **Rakai Distict.**

- ✧ Lwanda Health Centre III, Rakai Hospital, Kimuli Health Centre III, Buyamba Health Centre
- ✧ III, Rwamagwa Health Centre III, Kakyera Health Centre III, Kibale Health Centre II, Kitanda, Health Centre III
- ✧
- ✧ Local Governments In all AWAC's 57 Districts of operation where we get support from RDCs, CAOs, LCVs, Mayors, DCDOs,DHOs, Gender departments, HIV departments, among others

## List of Acronyms

<b>AGHA</b>	Action Group for Health, Human Rights and HIV/AIDS
<b>AGYW</b>	Adolescent Girls and Young Women
<b>AIC</b>	AIDS Information Centre
<b>AIDS</b>	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
<b>AJWS</b>	American Jewish World Services.
<b>ART</b>	Antiretroviral Therapy
<b>AMwA</b>	Akina Mama wa Afrika
<b>AWAC</b>	Alliance of Women Advocating for Change
<b>AWDF</b>	African Women Development Fund
<b>AVAC</b>	AIDS Vaccine Advocacy Coalition
<b>CDC</b>	Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
<b>CDDPS</b>	Community Drug Distribution Points
<b>CEHURD</b>	Centre for Health, Human Rights and Development
<b>CFCS</b>	Changing Faces, Changing Spaces
<b>CHLEGs</b>	Community Health and Livelihoods Enhancement Groups
<b>CCLADS</b>	Community Client ART Led Deliveries
<b>CAHIVPLus</b>	Community Actors for HIV Plus
<b>CxCa</b>	Cervical Cancer
<b>CSOs</b>	Civil Society Organizations
<b>CSMMUA</b>	Coalition to Stop Maternal Mortality due to Unsafe Abortion
<b>DiC</b>	Drop in Center
<b>DiCRA</b>	District Community Rights Advocates
<b>DMSD</b>	Differentiated Models of Service Delivery
<b>DPs</b>	Development Partners
<b>EDWA</b>	Empowered at Dusk Women Association
<b>EVAW/G</b>	Ending Violence against Women and Girls
<b>FAL</b>	Functional Adult Literacy
<b>FSWs</b>	Female Sex workers
<b>GACs</b>	Girls Action Clubs
<b>GBV</b>	Gender Based Violence
<b>GCWR</b>	Golden Centre for Women Rights.
<b>GEWE</b>	Gender Equality and Women Empowerment
<b>H/C</b>	Health Centre
<b>HIV</b>	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
<b>HRAPF</b>	Human Rights Promotion and Awareness Forum
<b>HR</b>	Human Rights
<b>HTS</b>	HIV Testing Services
<b>ICWEA</b>	International Community of Women Living with HIV Eastern Africa

<b>IDI</b>	Infectious Diseases Institute
<b>IAVI</b>	International AIDS Vaccine Initiative
<b>IOM</b>	International Organization for Migration
<b>JAR</b>	Joint AIDS Review
<b>IPs/</b>	Implementing Partners
<b>IEC</b>	Information Education and Communication
<b>KPIF</b>	Key Populations Investment Fund
<b>KWHSI</b>	Kabarole Women Health Support Initiative
<b>LBQ</b>	Lesbians, Bisexual and Queer
<b>MoH</b>	Ministry of Health
<b>NAFOPHANU</b>	National Forum of People Living With HIV/AIDS Networks in Uganda
<b>NASWD</b>	National Annual Sex Workers' Dialogue
<b>NSP</b>	Needle and Syringe Exchange programming
<b>OVC</b>	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
<b>PEP</b>	Post exposure Prophylaxis
<b>PEPFAR</b>	Presidential Emergence Fund for AIDS Relief
<b>PLHIV</b>	People Living With HIV
<b>PrEP</b>	Pre –exposure Prophylaxis
<b>PSS</b>	Psychosocial Support
<b>PTSD</b>	Post Traumatic Stress Disorder
<b>PVYA</b>	Platform for Vulnerable Youth and Adults
<b>PWUID</b>	People Who Use and Inject Drugs
<b>RHSP</b>	Rakai Health Science Program
<b>SDGs</b>	Sustainable Development Goals
<b>SNS</b>	Social network Strategy
<b>SOB</b>	Sexual Offenses Bill
<b>SOPs</b>	Standard Operating Procedures
<b>SRHR</b>	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
<b>STIs</b>	Sexually Transmitted Infections
<b>TB</b>	Tuberculosis
<b>TWG</b>	Technical Working Group
<b>UAC</b>	Uganda AIDS Commission
<b>UAF</b>	Urgent action Fund Africa
<b>UFF</b>	Uganda Feminist Forum
<b>UNNB</b>	Uganda Nn'edaggala N'obuwanga Bwaffe
<b>UGANET</b>	Uganda Network on Law Ethics and HIV/AIDS
<b>UHRN</b>	Uganda Harm Reduction Network
<b>UKPC</b>	Uganda Key Populations Consortium
<b>UNAIDS</b>	The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS
<b>URSB</b>	Uganda Registration Services Bureaus
<b>UN Women</b>	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality & the Empowerment of Women
<b>UPF</b>	Uganda Police Force

## 1.0 ABOUT AWAC

The Alliance of Women Advocating for Change (AWAC) is an SRHR umbrella network of feminist grassroots emerging Female Sex Worker (FSW) led organizations established in 2015 by FSWs, to support collective organizing and strengthen a resilient movement of FSWs that advocates for sustainable integrated universal health care, promotion of human rights and social protection, economic justice for FSWs including those with intersecting vulnerabilities in Uganda. In the past 5 years AWAC has reached over 32,000 Female Sex Workers (FSWs) and with intersecting and compounded vulnerabilities such as: FSWs with disability; FSWs Using or Injecting drugs; Indigenous FSWs in hard-to-reach and hard to leave areas; Refugee and Migrant FSWs in and out of settlement; FSWs living with HIV/AIDS; Elderly/Aging FSWs; Adolescents and Young Women engaging in sex work and surviving in sex work setting and Children of FSWs in Uganda.

AWAC has a robust programming through its Membership in the 57 districts across the 6 regions of Uganda with the possibility of expansion to other districts of Uganda; as the FSWs network and movement building keeps deepening and scaling up over the years. Regional & International Engagements: AWAC also engages with regional and international processes and mechanism at the East African Community (EAC) Region, Pan-African, and Global levels.

Our target population constituents include; Female Sex Workers (FSWs) in their general description, FSW with Disabilities, FSWs who Use or Inject Drugs, Senior/Elderly/Aging FSWs, Refugee and Migrant FSWs, Adolescent Girls & Young Women (AGYW) engaged in Sex Work, FSWs living with HIV, Indigenous FSWs, including those in hard-to-reach settings e.g. FSWs living on islands/landing sites, FSWs in transport corridors/stop-over transit towns and cities, FSWs along Border Towns/Points, FSWs in new Cities and Municipalities, FSWs in the Mining Communities and Oil Areas/Districts/Towns

### Mission

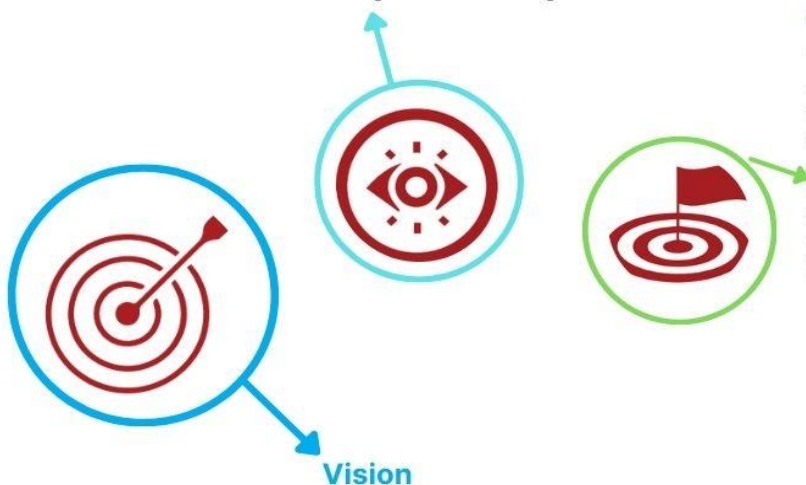
To build a resilient movement of female sex workers' that advocates for sustainable integrated universal health care, promotion of human rights and social protection, economic empowerment of FSWs and those with intersecting vulnerabilities in Uganda.

### Goal

To promote human rights and access to affordable, responsive and quality health and socio-economic services among female sex workers and other marginalized women and girls in Uganda empowerment of FSWs and those with intersecting vulnerabilities in Uganda.

### Vision

An inclusive policy and social environment where grassroots FSWs and those with intersecting vulnerabilities live healthy and productive lives that are free from human rights abuse in Uganda.



## Our Core Values:

- ◆ Mutual Respect and Integrity.
- ◆ Empowerment and Meaningful involvement
- ◆ Transparency and Accountability
- ◆ Appreciating diversity and non-discrimination
- ◆ Innovation, Excellence and Team Work
- ◆ Human rights and evidence-based programming

## Geographical coverage in 2023



By end of 2023, the organization had a reach of 57 districts, some of these include.

Kampala, Wakiso, Mukono, Busia, Terego, Tororo, Kabale, Isingiro, Kyotera, Masaka, Rakai, Lyantonde, Mbarara, Kasese, Kabarole, Kyegegwa, Kamwenge, Kyegegwa, Bundibugyo, Mbale, Jinja, Arua, Yumbe, Adjuman, Hoima, Gulu, Nakasongola, Kiryandongo, Masindi, Kiryandongo, Lira, Arua, Kitgum, Pader, Amuria, Kaberamaido, Moroto, Soroti, Kotido, Nepak, Luwero, Kabongo, Napiripiti, Mityana, Buikwe, Iganga, Bugiri, Namayingo, Mubende, Kassanda, Madi Okollo, and Kalangala.

## Institutional Objectives

1. To enhance access to integrated universal health care services among female sex workers and other marginalized women and girls.
2. To contribute to attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8,10, 16, 17 by enhancing social mobilization and promotion of human rights among female sex workers and other marginalized women and girls.
3. To advance SRHR services so that all Female Sex Workers, including those with intersecting and compounded vulnerabilities exercise their bodily autonomy, consent and control over their choices and decision.
4. To strengthen the economic security and social protection of female sex workers and other marginalized women and girls.
5. To strengthen a resilient female sex workers' movement to leverage on their capacities to demand for an enabling environment, equitable services and hold duty bearers accountable on existing development programmes.
6. To strengthen the institutional capacity of AWAC and her network members to effectively deliver the strategic plan.

## Five Game Changers

1. Influencing using a human rights-based approach- campaigns and policy briefs among others.
2. Strengthening digital technologies, research, documentation and knowledge management;
3. Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;
4. Exploring new partnerships, alliances and coalitions, and;
5. Emerging/ young leaders' capacity building and mindset change for long-term benefits and sustainability.

## 2.0 INTRODUCTION

This annual report provides a comprehensive overview of the activities and achievements of AWAC during the concluded year of 2023. It includes key milestones, interventions, challenges, lessons, recommendations, and the organization's financial performance. Throughout this period, despite the evolving and challenging legal landscape in Uganda as a result of the enactment of the Anti-homosexuality Act, 2023, and rolling back of the discussion on the Sexual Offenses Bill 2019, AWAC continued to work meet her mandate of building a resilient grassroots movement of female sex workers that advocates for sustainable integrated universal health care, promotion of human rights and social protection, economic empowerment of FSWs and other marginalized women/girls in Uganda. Following the unprecedented change in the legal environment, the organization persisted in carefully examining and evaluating the legal framework in order to develop strategies to prevent any negative repercussions. This involved closely monitoring the legal landscape and devising proactive measures to mitigate any potential backlash that may arise as a result of the new legislation.

The year 2023, marked a significant milestone for the organization as it launched its new 5 years strategic plan for 2024-2028, known as Compass 2028. This plan takes into account the knowledge, experiences, and best practices gained from previous years. At 8 years old, AWAC has entered a new phase of development, characterized by vibrant potential for growth. The organization has experienced remarkable growth, innovation, and learning, alongside challenging realities. Throughout the year, efforts were made to consolidate previous achievements while also exploring new avenues for institutional transformation. Our work aligns with local, national, regional, and international health, human rights, and development objectives, including Uganda's laws, the National Development Plan, the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The new strategic plan brings about various changes at the governance, management, and programmatic levels, aimed at transforming AWAC.

### A. Governance Level

In 2023, we also successful establishment of a Board of



*Caption taken during the Launch of the AWAC Strategic plan 2024-2028*

Trustees (BoT), with appointment of a new Board of Directors (BoD). We recognize the phenomenal strategic leadership of the outgoing Board and their relentless service to AWAC. Throughout the reporting year, we received invaluable insights, support and guidance on matters of how AWAC can ably sustain herself through her Hub of Holistic Transformation (HHoT) development vision.

**B. Management Level**

At the management level, the strategic plan projects occupied positions of the two Deputy Executive Directors, a Management Team – comprised of Directors and Managers. The plan also envisages the offices of the Directors to head the Directorates that support the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of AWAC’s 5 Domains of Change and Programs of Work.

**C. Programmatic Level**

At the programmatic level, the plan introduces six domains of change and programs of work Programme, that is-  
 1) Network and Movement Building, 2). Access to Services, 3). Advocacy Lobbying & Influence Policy Development, 4).

Research and Knowledge Management 5). Strengthening Capacity to contribute to the SDGs, Skills Development and Economic Empowerment, and 6). Organizational Development and Sustainability. In 2023, AWAC continued to build a strong community tenacity in public health emergencies, particularly through the post Ebola community engagements as well as the launch of the much anticipated and needed Community Actors for HIV PLUS. This is the first initiative to put a focus not only on socio-economic resilience of communities in public health emergencies but so incorporating mental health. Further still, information on our epidemic response efforts was provided in mainstream media through discussions on Televisions and print media --reiterating how the communities of sex workers, traditional healers, and People Living with HIV came up with different solutions to navigate through the journey of the Post Ebola recovery. This showed the unique capacities of such minoritized communities in indigenizing approaches to epidemic response and building the communities’ resilience. Further into the year, we held our 5th National Annual Sex Workers’ Dialogue (NASWD). This year’s NASWD was unlike others, it was community based, gathering





over 280 participants. In the same space, we showcased the significance of the community innovations such as the AWAC Drop in-Centres across the country in amplifying access to integrated HIV and SRHR services, and economic empowerment to over 32,000 marginalized women such as sex workers in Uganda in the past eight years of our existence. In that reporting period, the organization expanded its area of health focus through venturing into the environmental justice, with advocacy on the intersectionality of climate change, Gender based violence and sexual reproductive health of minoritized youths in Terego and Madi-Okollo districts. It's worthwhile to note that the organization expanded to 57 districts in 2023 from 47 districts in 2022. The partnerships have been extended to District leaderships by securing two new Memorandums of Understanding (MoU), that is; for Terego and Madi Okollo districts in the humanitarian setting. Throughout the past year, the organization continued to expand and present its work on a regional and global scale. Our presence at the SAAF global gathering marketplace in Nairobi allowed us to showcase our efforts to a diverse group of SRH practitioners and activists. We took the opportunity to highlight the inclusive

approach of AWAC towards Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR), emphasizing the importance of harm reduction and access to self-care services for women on the outskirts of society in Uganda.

Additionally, towards the end of the year, we were honored to participate in the 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and People's Rights (ACHPR) in Arusha, Tanzania. During this event, we delved into the depth of regional processes and discussions on human rights observance, particularly in relation to the priorities of local and regional contexts, such as the sexual reproductive health and rights of women. We also examined the implementation, compliance, and public accountability of different protocols outlined in the African Charter by states and relevant stakeholders. It is worth noting that during the same reporting year, we extended our support to grassroots networks in various African countries, particularly in the areas of grassroots sex work and queer community advocacy. Our involvement in the International Conference on access to health services for Key populations in Mozambique allowed us to not only share best practices but also to enhance the advocacy capacities of sex workers, LGBTIQ individuals, and



other marginalized populations during the International Conference on access to health services for Key populations in Mozambique. Some of these organizations included the Citizen Observatory for Health in Maputo <https://www.observatoriodesaude.org/>. This was a space to draw lessons and learnings from Uganda on how AWAC has served the key populations (such as LGBTIQ persons and Sex workers) with tailored unique health services amidst the storm of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023. As we reflect on the past year, we are proud of the progress we have made in advancing our mission to promote sexual and reproductive health and rights in Africa. Our participation in global gathering and regional conferences has allowed us to amplify our message and engage with a diverse group of stakeholders --including the non-tradition norm shift actors. By emphasizing harm reduction and access to self-care services, we have been able to make a meaningful impact on the lives of women in Uganda who are often marginalized. Additionally, our involvement in the ACHPR and other regional conferences has provided us with a valuable opportunity to advocate for the rights of marginalized communities and to strengthen grassroots networks across the continent. In pursuit of

our objective to build a strong, vibrant, and sustainable institution, we have achieved significant milestones. Following the recommendations of our grassroots members during the 2024-2028 strategic plan review, we successfully acquired a twenty-four-acre land in Luweero District and a plot in Mengo equivalent to 29 decimal, Kampala - the capital of Uganda. These acquisitions mark a monumental step towards our vision of establishing the Hub of Holistic Transformation (HHoT) contributing to our grand sustainability plan [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ay2Xwm\\_eWdL0](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ay2Xwm_eWdL0)

Furthermore, our partnership portfolio has continued to expand, with the addition of esteemed partners such as SAAF, Medical College of Wisconsin, African Women Development Fund, and Reach Out Mbuya. This growth has been complemented by a remarkable 20% increase in our annual project portfolio and a 28% rise in revenue, with our earnings growing from 841,591,185 million in 2022 to 1.2 billion in 2023. In our growth to occupy spaces and engage different stakeholders on human rights and health rights of sex workers and other marginalized women, our Executive director, Ms. Macklean Kyomya was elected on the



*During the Launch of the Community Actors for HIV PLUS Consortium*

steering committee of the country RMNCAH+N platform. On this platform, Macklean leads the Reproductive health Forum (which is part of the forums that make up the RMNCAH+N platform in Uganda). Moreover, we are delighted to report that our staff size grew from 26 to 29, demonstrating our commitment to expanding our human capital and expertise. This expansion has equipped us with the resources and talents necessary to drive our mission forward and make a lasting impact in the communities we serve. We are delighted to note that we did not only grow in size, our staff's careers were also on the path of growth. Some of our staffs completed their courses in the Lawyering profession, some enrolled for postgraduate education for example in public health, and management courses, others were further supported through learning retreats (organized by our partners such as AWDF, SAAF, IDI-Masaka region and UKPC) to grow their on-job skills in the profession practice lines of; Monitoring Evaluation and Learning, Resource mobilization, finance and data management. 2023, marked the grand start of our noble journey to combat cervical cancer --which was integrated in our HIV and SRHR services provided at our drop-in centres. As the year drew to a close, we were elated to have served over 94 of our cherished community members with a myriad of cervical cancer services, including screening, counselling, and referrals. This

remarkable feat underscores our commitment to bettering the lives of those we serve. In keeping with our mission to empower marginalized populations, we lent our support to emerging programs that catered to the needs of key populations. One such program was the 15-year Reimagining Uganda programme, nurtured by the Let's Walk Uganda. This laudable endeavour, which sprang forth in 2023, sought to bolster the LGBTQIA+ movement and foster an environment of acceptance and inclusivity, following the enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023 in Uganda. We stood side by side with our brothers and sisters, striving for their rights and a more egalitarian society. This momentous year witnessed the expansion of our reach in Uganda as the number of DiCs/safe spaces grew exponentially from four to seven, that is in Terego, Bugiri, and Jinja districts. Additionally, 5 more Safe spaces across the country of our grassroots members were supported last year through the District Community Rights Advocates (DiCRAs) program, supported by AWDF. Despite these commendable and impressive milestones, the organization also faced terrifying challenges due to the evolving legal landscape, most notable of this was the threatening eviction and the accusations from our opposition for promoting prostitution, abortion, homosexuality and depopulation agendas in Uganda at our Kampala Drop-in



*During the National Community Modern contraception dialogue*

Centre. Sad to note that three of our staff members faced attacks –which were in the form of home break-ins, and verbal emotional attacks on accusations of working for an organization that promote abortion and homosexuality.

## At the Glimpse

### Strategic Objective 1:

Enhance access to integrated universal health care services among female sex workers and other marginalized women and girls

- **4021** FSWs and AGYW in sex work settings Enrolled on Pre –exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP) in Kampala, Wakiso, Masaka, Mubende, Kyotera. This number increased by 374 FSWs served from **3647** in 2022.

- **724** FSWs and AGYW in sex work settings supported to be initiated and retained on Antiretroviral Therapy in Kampala, Wakiso, Masaka, Mubende, Kyotera. This number grew by **51** from **673** in 2022. Whilst, this was a reducing trend of growth compared to an increase from the reference reporting period of 2021 to 2022 which grew by **232** clients. This was due to the intensified prevention mechanisms and the emphasized use of the Undetectable equals to Untransmittable strategies used such as; the innovative community models for strengthening ART adherence such as the CCLADs and CDDPs.

We are happy to report that **78** clients were brought back to care for ART and **788** for PrEP.

- **988** of our community members who had faced Physical, sexual and emotional violence were Provided with basic counselling services (this number reduced from **1291** in 2022). This is attributed to the intensified social cohesion dialogues that have been held been Female sex workers and local leaders.

- **28** FSWs Disabilities (including those in humanitarian settings) were empowered with universal basic sign language skills. These were equipped with information on fundamental human rights, livelihood and, saving skills, information on HIV stigma and discrimination reduction, PrEP and ART adherence, educative information on GBV▪

- **97** of our community members were provided with Post Exposure Prophylaxis

- **288** of our community members were provided with emergency contraception services

- **705** of our grassroots community members were availed with psychosocial support services. This was above the year 2022 figure of **498** clients by **207** clients served due to our expanded psycho social support services through the use our Malaika toll-free helpline services.

- **2758** FSWs and AGYW were screened for STI and UTIs, whilst **515** got treatment. This number enormously grew from **202** in 2022 to **515** with a growth of **313** in 2023. ▪

- **878** FSW were provided with the Family planning services. This number grew from **684** in 2022. The growth can be attributed to our expansion to two new districts that is; Jinja and Bugiri in Eastern Uganda.

- **419** FSWs received post abortion care services. Remarkably to note that this number grew from **379** in 2022 due to our expansion to two new districts (Bugiri and Jinja) in providing post abortion care services.

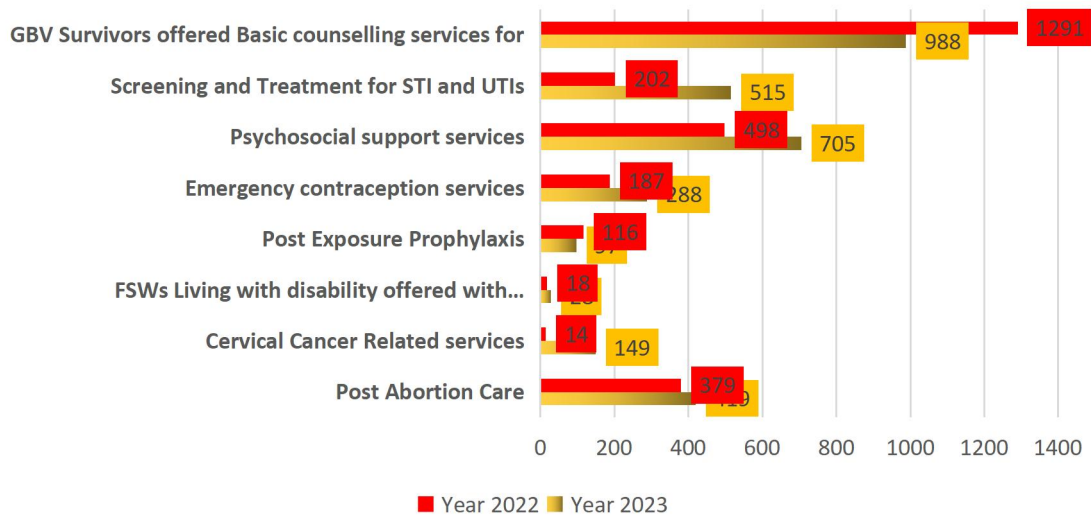
- **104** recipients of care received Viral Load Bleeding services. This was among the mechanisms that were established and intensified in the DiC department, to identify the clients with poor ART drug adherence.

- **155** Children of FSWs were tested for HIV.

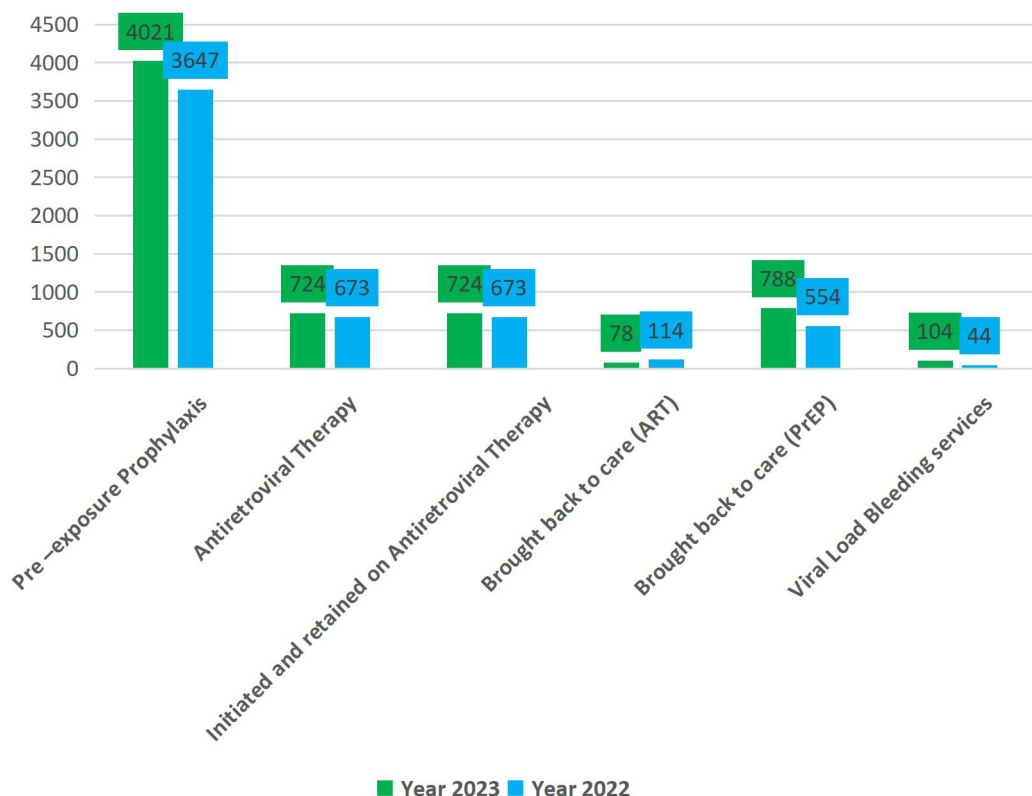
- **06** Children of FSWs tested positive.

- **135640** Packs of condoms, and **29540** Sackets of Lubricants were distributed, thereby saving over **1840** FSWs and **598** AGYW in sex work contexts who would have contracted HIV.

### A comparison Graph On the Number of community members served in 2022 and 2023 With SRH Services



### A comparison Graph On the Number of community members served in 2022 and 2023 With HIV Response Services



Continued to strengthen and following up the existing Community Drug Distribution Points (CDDPs) with 28 members and 3

Community Client Led Art Delivery (CCLADs) with **39** members. This has improved ART adherence and retention for **78** recipients of care.

### Strategic Objective 2:

Contribute to attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8,10, 16, 17 by enhancing social mobilization and promotion of human rights among female sex workers and other marginalized women and girls

- Participated in **4** global platforms where we presented our Differentiated Models of Service Delivery, and advocacy. These engagements included, the ICAP meeting coordinated by Ministry of Health, SAAF Global gathering, International Conference on access to health services for Key populations in Mozambique, and the 77th ordinary session of African Commission on Human and People's Rights in Arusha.

**200** trees with the dual purpose of improving aeration and the overall environment. Additionally, these trees were strategically placed to provide shade for AGYW during their health discussions

**6** grassroots members' organization capacities were enhanced through the different capacity enhancement activities such as exchange learning visits, and peer exchange learning sessions, notable of these organizations, were; Women for Resilience and Health (WoSH) Isingiro, Soroti Women's Health Initiative, Kalangala District Human Rights Advocates, AMA ECORA initiative--Arua, CEMINET Kitgum, and Bright Life Foundation Kitgum.

### Strategic Objective 3:

Advance SRHR services so that all Female Sex Workers, including those with intersecting and compounded vulnerabilities exercise their bodily autonomy, consent and control over their choices and decision

**20** Female Sex Workers from Bugiri, Jinja, Kampala, Wakiso, Busia, Tororo, Kyotera, and Masaka were trained as expert clients in providing community based comprehensive SRHR services using the accompaniment model.

**419** Female sex workers were reached with comprehensive SRHR services using the accompaniment model. Important to note that, this number increased from **379** in 2023 to **419** in 2023.

**88** stakeholders were engaged --including journalists during multi-stakeholder dialogues on the roles and guidelines of Human Rights Defenders in harnessing synergies to enhance access to justice, healthcare, and community social cohesion.

**515** rights holders were engaged during the 16 Days of activism with an aim to create - awareness on the forms of violence experienced by Female Sex Worker in their diversities.

### Strategic Objective 4: Strengthen the economic security and social protection of female sex workers and other marginalized women and girls

**243** AGYW during the year were equipped with economic livelihood skills, and the SRHR/HIV information sharing sessions. These included 29 Female sex workers living with disabilities.

### Strategic Objective 5:

Strengthen a resilient female sex workers' movement to leverage on their capacities to demand for an enabling environment, equitable services and hold duty bearers accountable on existing development programmes

**30** grass-root female sex work organizations through the District Community Human Rights Advocates Program were trained on in grassroots transformation leadership, tracking, documentation and reporting of

rights violations, as well as their fundamental human rights.

### **Strategic Objective 6:**

**Strengthen the institutional capacity of AWAC and her network members to effectively deliver the strategic plan**

**3** Drop-in Centres/safe spaces were established in Terego, Bugiri, and Jinja.

**5** of our grassroots member organizations were supported to amplify their grassroots social accountability advocacy, and service delivery through the District Community Human Rights Advocates Program.

Successfully acquired a 24-acre land in Luweero District and a plot in Mengo equivalent to **29** decimals, Kampala - the capital of Uganda. These acquisitions mark a monumental step towards our vision of establishing the Hub of Holistic Transformation (HHoT) contributing to our grand sustainability plan <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ay2Xwm eWdL0>

## **Experiences and Stories of Resilience**

### **DiCRA story on the unjust leaders**

Following the Female sex workers' participation in the empowerment sessions such as, in the feminist grassroots movement building and advocacy, and responsibilities of Human Rights Defenders (HRDs). The Female sex work HRDs and DiCRAs in Arua district took a stand and led the initiation of a petition calling for the removal of the Resident City Commissioner (RCC), Ms. Alice Akello, who was known for being opposed to the rights of sex workers. This walk and petition were to oust the current RCC in the FSWs' efforts to work with the community to remove bad anti-rights

leaders in order to improve service delivery and boost the security of the community members. This petition was not only to address the issue of the RCC but also the Lord Mayor and the District Police Commander (DPC) who the society, the FSWs and the community accused of carrying on security operations that are targeting harmless civilians such as sex workers. This petition gained momentum and eventually reached the State House in Kampala. Fortunately, there was a positive outcome to this petition as the Arua City district responded to the pressure and agreed to transfer Ms. Akello, the RCC in question. As a result, during the council meeting on September 29th, 2023, at the Arua district offices, there was an agenda item dedicated to discussing the final transfer of Ms. Akello from her position in Arua. With the petition and the march, the FSWs gained the attention of the deputy secretary of defense who committed to take action. He visited the area and the DPC put a stop to the unlawful arrests of Sex workers and other harmless citizens. This development signifies a victory for the grassroots sex workers in Arua district, as their efforts to advocate for their rights and challenge those who hindered them have proven successful. It also highlights the importance of empowering and sensitizing grassroots female sex workers on their rights and responsibilities, as this knowledge was instrumental in mobilizing and organizing the petition. Moving forward, it is crucial to continue supporting and uplifting the voices of grassroots marginalized communities, such as sex workers, to ensure their rights are protected and respected. This case serves as a reminder of the power of collective action and the potential for positive change when individuals come together to fight for justice and equality.

### **Nandy: Mubende District –Ebola Epidemic in Mubende**

"I come from Butoloogo, I contracted Ebola and started bleeding through the nose. When I came to the health facility, the health

worker told me to go through the happy shower. The happy shower is where an Ebola patient takes off all the clothes and any belongings. The health workers burn all the clothes, phone and all the other belongings you come with while with Ebola. I was very sick and was taken to ETU, every minute they would take out dead bodies of Ebola. I thought I would die too because I was bleeding and because many people were dying. Recently, I faced a lot of stigma where I stay. People thought I was still ill and they might contract Ebola. Thankfully, through these AWAC awareness and counselling sessions, I feel so redeemed and am willing to go back to help my fellow Ebola survivors”

### **Ms. Teddy Ayo--CEMINET DiCRA**

After engaging with the district authorities in Kitgum district during the safe motherhood community Barazza, the district agreed to allow female sex workers to participate in the annual district planning meetings. This would enable them to contribute their perspectives and ideas to empower women, improve access to sexual reproductive health services, and provide other essential services for women in the district. This commitment was fulfilled, as one of the DiCRA leaders, Ms. Ayo Teddy, attended the Kitgum municipal council budget consultative workshop conference for the financial year 2024/2025 on October 27th. This is a significant achievement as it demonstrates sub-national leadership recognizing the involvement of DiCRAs in budget processes, aligning with Section 9 (1) of the Uganda Public Financial Management Act 2015 (Amended). Teddy advocated for support for female sex worker groups in the district's empowerment programs, and her request was accepted by the district for her two groups, "Golden Women United" and "Mon-pe-mimo group", will be supported in the upcoming year 2024/2025 under the the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP).

### **Namuli Lilian and Bakyala Kwetelana--Isingiro**

On higher ground of transforming and practically changing communities through the established safe spaces, our programs through the CHLEG model have impactfully enhanced better living of Female Sex Workers.

The Story of the DiCRA (Bakyara Kweterana) of Isingiro at Kikagati boarder can attest to this. Ms. Namuli Lilian —AWAC member and a DiCRA from WoSH, narrates how their savings using the CHLEG model has expanded and strengthened their economic muscle. She notes that they started small but the group lacked proper leadership and financial prudence skills for them to grow until they were equipped with knowledge through the DiCRA program of AWAC. “We have started a hire-out tent business, and at a more exciting note, we have been able to purchase a house which we can use store our hire-out tent equipment, chairs, tarpaulins, and catering business crockery tools.”

### **Story of Arinaye Monica**

At the boarder police cell, meet Arinaye Monica a participant in the WoSH DiCRAs in Isingiro. Her journey reflects the impact and transformation experience that the DiCRA program and their safe spaces have caused. Monica, a resilient woman in her early thirties initially faced health challenges due to limited access to medical services in her community, when the project started to support health commodity distribution, Monica found relief because the essential medications and hygiene products became more accessible leading to an improvement in her overall well-being. Further, Monitor narrates that, as Monica attended economic empowerment and problem-solving sessions organized by the DiCRAs, she discovered new opportunities for financial empowerment. The session equipped her with skills in budgeting and entrepreneurship. Inspired Monica embraced a small-scale business idea, starting a community garden that has not



only contributed to her income but also promoted environmentally sustainable practices within the community.

The project's empowerment of the DICRAs has opened doors for Monica to connect with fellow participants and local leaders. This sense of community fostered collaboration has turned the project into a shared journey. Monica has become an active participant in the community decision-making forums at the Kitagatte boarder, and advocating for sustainable initiatives (for sex workers) and sharing her success story to inspire others.

Monica has shared her experience encouraging fellow DiCRA members to embrace change and take charge of their well-being. Reflecting on her journey, Monica expressed gratitude for the DiCRA programme's holistic approach --Which integrated a focus on health and economic empowerment. Monica's story epitomizes the potential for positive change when communities are empowered, engaged and equipped with the necessary skills to develop themselves.

### 3.0 Programme Development and Implementation --Key Highlights

During reporting year, AWAC operated in over 50 districts with the expansion to Mubende region (That is, Mubende and Kassanda Districts), and Eastern Region (that is; Jinja and Bugiri Districts).

**A summary and a swift look at the key interventions and achievements in the year against the six strategic objectives.** Further, the annual report categorizes activities based on five key game changers as listed below.

**Game Changer One:**

Influencing using a human rights-based approach- campaigns, policy briefs among others.

**Game changer Two:**

Strengthening digital technologies, research, documentation and knowledge management;

**Game changer three:**

Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;

**Game changer Four:**

Exploring new partnerships, alliances and coalitions

**Game changer Five:**

Emerging/ young leaders' capacity building and mindset change for long-term benefits and sustainability.

**Objective One:** To enhance access to integrated universal health care services among female sex workers and other marginalized women and girls.

**Game Changer one:** Influencing using a human rights-based approach- campaigns and policy briefs among others

**1.1) Our efforts in public health emergencies and strengthening community resilience:**

During that reference year, we invested our efforts partly into post pandemic and epidemic response --which was crucial in light of the COVID-19 and Ebola outbreak in Uganda. AWAC conducted post Ebola sensitization dialogues in Masaka, Kassanda, Kampala-Wakiso and Mubende. We



Group photograph taken during the Post Ebola Sensitization Dialogue in Mubende District

continued to raise awareness about the impact of stigma and discrimination caused by the previous Ebola outbreak on individuals, such as Sex workers, People Living with HIV (PLHIV), traditional healers, and Bodaboda riders. Communities shared their experiences on the Ebola outbreak to promote understanding and empathy for effective responses in future public health emergencies. Important to acknowledge that, this was also to address the issues of stigma and discrimination faced by these groups and promote psychosocial support within the communities.

The engagements allowed us to listen to the community and provide the needed information on responsive and integrated psychosocial support to combat stigma during unprecedented future Public Health nightmares that may affect FSWs, people living with HIV and Traditional Healers. During the sessions, health workers, and CHLEGs Representatives shared on the operations of their groups that have been nurtured and supported by Alliance of Women Advocating for Change to improve their saving culture and health seeking behaviors during the Ebola public health crisis especially in Mubende and Kassanda.

Our engagement further encompassed resuscitating the conversation of multi-sectoral collaborative efforts in strengthening

came as a result of the shared post Ebola lived realities, challenges, collective coping mechanisms and resilience among Female Sex Workers and Bodaboda men. We are glad to report that Seven CHLEGs (in Masaka, Kassanda, Kampala, Wakiso and Mubende consisting 292 beneficiaries) were formed, four of these have been fully registered with the local authorities such as the town councils.

### 1.2) Launching of the Community Actors for HIV Plus (CAHIVPLUS) Initiative

We are ecstatic to share that 2023 saw us launching the CAHIVPlus initiative, a community-led initiative which focuses on public health emergencies, mental health, HIV/SRH and socioeconomic resilience. CAHIVPlus stems from the response to the challenges faced during the Ebola epidemic and COVID-19 pandemic. The initiative which is a consortium partnership between AWAC, NAFOPHANU and UNNB supported by UNAIDS and WHO will prioritize epidemics and pandemics preparedness, mental health support, HIV/SRHR, and economic resilience. During the launch, in order to amplify use of evidence to address the effects of public health crises, community constituent leaders for the Community Health and Livelihood Enhancement Groups (CHLEGs), PLHIV, and Traditional healers were handed IPads to ease data collection



*Photograph moment with Tweyambe CHLEG Group in Mubenden District – Formed during the hit of Ebola*



*Our grassroots members from Masaka, Kampala, Wakiso, Mubende, and Kassanda testifying on the impact of their formed CHLEGs during the Ebola Epidemic*

self-help resilience building initiatives such as the CHLEGs in Epidemic response. This

on the areas of focus for the consortium such as public health emergencies, HIV/SRHR,

economic resilience, and mental health in their communities.

**Game changer Two: Strengthening digital technologies, research, documentation and knowledge management;**

**1.3) Our role in Ebola epidemic response through media**

The year presented another opportunity for us to amplify our advocacy through the air waves --where we discussed communities' response in the post Ebola recovery. We used these platforms to acknowledge that when the health crises occur, it's the minoritized populations' (such as sex workers) that are affected most. Their livelihood and mental health are devastated more compared to other mainstream populations. We further reiterated that; these are one of the most left out communities in most cases when there are public emergency responses. It is always the specialists like health workers that take a center stage in such public Health emergencies yet grassroots communities are key players in pandemic/epidemic control and management. Additionally, we acknowledged the importance of the social economic resilient models like CHLEGs in Ebola and COVID-19 health crises. During the Ebola and Coronavirus outbreak, the CHLEGs model played a crucial role in reducing the spread of the viruses among female sex workers. This model facilitated the dissemination of accurate information about Ebola and COVID-19 prevention, including proper hygiene practices, referral

sites, reporting GBV cases, counselling and the importance of seeking medical care promptly. By equipping female sex workers with this knowledge, it effectively reduced the risk of transmission within their communities. **Further, CHLEGs provided emotional and economic support to female sex workers affected by the COVID-19 and later the Ebola crisis. By offering emergency interest-free loans (within their groups) and access to savings, this enabled sex workers to meet their basic needs without resorting to high-risk activities that could contribute to the further spread of the viruses.** This mild financial stability not only protected sex workers from the immediate economic impact of the Ebola and COVID-19 outbreak but also created a buffer against future crises.

**Amplifying our Impact in pandemic and Epidemic Response through Media**

In the heat of the Ebola virus disease, AWAC together with other community based organisations banded together as Community Actors for HIV Plus ([CAHIV Plus Uganda](#)) to benchmark and support the communities' (the sex workers, Traditional healers, and PLHIV) unique capacities as a leeway of indigenizing approaches to epidemic response and building the communities' resilience. We provided information in print media on our epidemic response efforts and further participated in a panel discussion on BABA TV which reiterated how the communities of sex workers, traditional healers, , and PLHIV came up with different solutions which



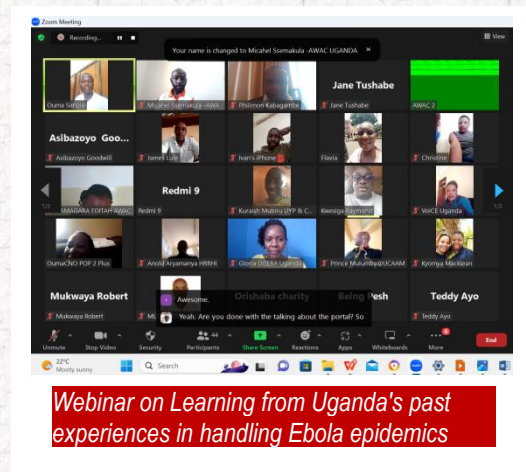
*Our Team represented Mr. Michael Ssemakula and Ms. Resty Kyomukama Magezi were on Baba TV and Family TV to create sensitization but also communicate on how the communities of sex workers, traditional healers, and PLHIV came up with different solutions which helped navigate through the journey of Post Ebola recovery.*

helped navigate through the journey of Post Ebola recovery. In these media spaces we shared how AWAC empowered sex workers through self-help resilience building initiatives like CHLEGs and Community based Mental Health and Psychosocial support for a swift recovery in the post Ebola period. The viewers of the show on different platforms like YouTube and Facebook acknowledged through their comments the need to strengthen prevention efforts, dispel myths, and promote testing. This can be one way we can combine modern medical knowledge with traditional wisdom to protect our communities against epidemics!

handling Ebola epidemics a call to invest in strengthening grassroots community structures, socioeconomic resilience and coordination among marginalized communities for future epidemic responses". Our partners UNAIDS, WHO, Members of the Ministry of Health and consortium partners in Ebola response NAFOPHANU and UNNB spotlighted the need for socioeconomic resilience in health emergencies. Participants added their voice to the conversation alluding to the significance of integrating mental health in public emergency responses.

**During the year, our team paid a courtesy visit to Dr. Faith Nakiyimba | District Health Officer —Masaka District.**

This was an informative discussion to get information on how Masaka district had planned to serve marginalized women through its Ebola response programme.



**Game changer three:** Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;

**Learning from Uganda's past experiences in handling Ebola epidemics**

The early start of the year 2023, exposed us to another challenge of interrogating Uganda's past experiences in handling Ebola epidemics after the Ministry of Health designed the Post Ebola recovery plan January--June, 2023, we held a webinar on "Learning from Uganda's past experiences in

**Stories and Experiences from the Survivors of the Ebola Epidemic in Mubende District**

**Jammy (Pseudo Name) Mubende District**

*"So, because there was curfew, each one of us had to sit at the doors of our hotspots and wait for the clients. However, there was a big fight for clients because they were very scarce due to the curfew. So, when we got some few clients passing by in the hot spots, we could fight like vampires for them with our colleagues and whoever won got that client. Those that didn't would keep in the cold waiting for their luck and in most cases we*



Some of the photographs taken during the Post Ebola Sensitization dialogues in Mubende, Kassanda, Masaka, Kampala, and Wakiso

would not get clients and we ended up being in the cold for no good reason. Ebola left us in wrangles with our neighbors just because of one client. If we went to the streets to avoid such wrangles with our colleagues at the hotspots, Police would beat us and take even the 5000 Shillings you might have in the pocket. We got a lot of challenges with those security operatives. We did not know them, they were so tough and they would beat us, leave us wounded yet we had no money for seeking health care for such wounds and you would have nowhere to report such cases. Also, since the police knew that if the men came to us, it would pose more risk for Ebola infections among the clients and us, the police were very strict and guarded our spaces closely to shun away the men”

**Fortuna --Mubende District**

“There is a lot of stigma associated to a person and a family that had an Ebola patient. The health facility vehicles that keep coming to the home and being associated to a health facility or even visiting a health

facility also intensify that stigma. Whenever the community came to know that you have an Ebola trait, you would not be able to go buy anything at any grocery shop, if you met someone along the way, they would hide so that they don’t get in contact with you, so my fear was about the community knowing that I was in contact with an Ebola patient at the health facility. When my partner got Ebola, we were so stigmatized. People would even run away from a housefly that has made a stop at my house. Even when they saw any vehicle coming to the community, they would say it was coming to my household to pick a new patient, luckily it was the health workers who would come and counsel us and we became better. Now also the community is accepting us again. We can now go to the shops without people running away from us and they can also come to buy items from us.”

**Game changer three:** Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;

2023 was a special year in expanding the approaches we use to contribute to increase

access to SRHR services. This was achieved when we engaged in a number of regional and global events where we had the platform to share our community models and innovations that have led to better yields in SRHR and HIV outcomes.

**1.4) We participated in the regional South-to-South Learning Network HIV prevention Workshop in Cape Town. Represented by our Team leader Ms. Kyomya Macklean, AWAC shared grassroots best practices in HIV prevention and the power of community-led data generation for advocacy, with a case-in-line of AWAC Uganda's approaches in**



*Ms Macklean Kyomya at SSLN*

application of raw data for evidence generation. We strongly accentuated the significance of investing in these efforts to strengthen grassroots organic innovations that pragmatically contribute to research and effective HIV programming. Furthermore,

AWAC shared her binomial experiences and impact in HIV response and Intersectional SRHR programming marginalized women, such as the sex workers in Uganda.

**1.5) We took part in the International Conference on access to health services for Key populations in Africa.** During the year, in collaboration with People's Health Movement-Uganda, AWAC joined the Citizen Observatory for Health in Maputo-Mozambique for the International Conference on access to health services for Key populations. We shared our experiences of navigating through the challenging legal landscape and the valuable lessons we have learned in serving marginalized communities, aiming to benefit the rest of the continent. We additionally interrogated the most problematic clauses in the Uganda's Anti Homosexuality Act, 2023, and how these affect access to services for key populations, and why we need the entire Act repealed. We also provided guidance on how other 30 countries in Africa facing similar oppressive and anti-rights laws can continue to supporting key populations' access to tailored healthcare services. This came in timely after witnessing the an unprecedented surge in the passing of a number of harsh



and repressive laws and policies that have negatively impacted the accessibility of healthcare services for marginalized populations in Uganda., We saw this as a trend that is going to continue in Africa with the most recent proposed an Anti-

Homosexuality Bill in Ghana and other non-progressive Laws and policies across Africa.

**Game changer Four: Exploring new partnerships, alliances and coalitions**

**1.6) In expanding the HIV prevention options, this year AWAC joined the African Women's Prevention Community Accountability Board in introducing the Women's HIV Prevention Choice Manifesto. This manifesto aims to provide HIV prevention options that empower women to make informed choices and create a positive impact in order to support the ambitious goal of ending the new HIV infections by 2030.**



allowed us to present the work we have been doing to combat the spread of HIV among sex workers and other key populations affected by the virus in Masaka, Kyotera, Rakai, and Bukomansimbi.

Additionally, at the 2023 Edition of the HIV/AIDS Symposium, we demonstrated the importance of community involvement in responding to public health emergencies, particularly the recent Ebola outbreak in Uganda. At the exhibition, we highlighted the various strategies and tangible outcomes achieved through the training of CHLEGs in alternative income-generating skills. These measures were implemented alongside community psycho-social support, mental health initiatives, and risk reduction communication as part of a broader socioeconomic resilience approach aimed at mitigating the long-term impacts of the post-Ebola epidemic.

**Game changer Four: Exploring new partnerships, alliances and coalitions**

**1.7) World AIDS DAY**

During the year, we took part in World AIDS day celebrations, with a significant highlight being our involvement in the 2023 National

**1.8) SAAF Global Convening**

The year also presented an opportunity for the organization to participate in the global SRHR platforms, such as the SAAF global



*Captions of our Team at the National AIDS Day Celebrations in Rakai District, and the Exhibition that was done at HIV/AIDS Symposium 2023*

AIDS Day Celebrations in Rakai District. Our team from the Masaka region represented us at this event, where we showcased our efforts in addressing the HIV epidemic within our marginalized community members. This

gathering. The gathering brought together different SRHR crusaders and advocates at grassroots, national, regional and global level from over 50 countries in Africa, Latin America, Asia and Europe. Further we



participated in the global gathering marketplace organized in the same convening --where we showcased our work to different SRH practitioners and activists. Moreso elaborating on the inclusive approach of AWAC towards Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights which has amplified utilization of harm reduction, and access to self-care services in SRHR. We left energized and invigorated to reach more vulnerable communities that have limited access to self-care options, harm reduction, and essential SRHR services.

Through our recent participation in the Ebola response in the worst hit districts such as Kassanda and Mubende, we recognize that accountability is crucial in Public Health emergencies to ensure effective response and prevention. It's not just about finding a solution, but also holding individuals, organizations, and governments responsible for their actions, decisions, and resources. In 2023, we joined Ministry of Health and World Health Organization on the Ebola Virus Disease Accountability Forum to discuss the status of the Uganda National Post Ebola recovery plan, and how the country has benefited from it. On this platform, AWAC represented the CAHIVPLUS consortium,

**1.9) AWAC's participation on the Ebola Virus Disease Accountability platform.**



and informed the audience on how Female sex workers had multiple social economic burdens during the Ebola outbreaks —which was worsened by stigma and discrimination in access to food aid relief, and the inadequate mental health services available for them.



*Ebola Virus Disease Accountability platform Session*

**Objective 2: Attainment of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)- 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 8,10, 16, by enhancing social mobilization and promotion of human rights among female sex workers and other marginalized women and girls.**

**Game changer three: Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;**

2.1) During the reporting year, AWAC continued raising awareness on responsive SRHR, mental health, protection, and social economic services access barriers as a leeway of adopting creative and novel ways of reaching numerous diverse marginalized

existence of digital platforms for information on SRHR, there are persistent gaps in information and awareness about SRH services, landscape and Rights among the marginalized AGYW. Most notable of these SRHR information awareness raising sessions was the commemoration of [the International Day Of The African Child](#), with a creative football Match (under the [“Kick for Equality”](#) theme between AWAC and Youth Environmental Sciences (YES) in Busia district --supported by the [We Lead](#) programme. The match was a space to make history and going unrestrained in breaking gender norms and creating awareness on SRHR access and uptake in the district, supported by Busia District Local Government.

2.2) In the same period of reference, in an effort to promote inclusivity in healthcare funding, 2023 saw us organizing a training and meaningful discussions on local level budgeting, bringing together a diverse group of local leaders and young people from both the Rhino refugee settlement camp in Terego district and the Madi Okollo district. The dialogue was held under the theme of *“leave no one behind in health budgets”*, emphasizing the importance of ensuring that everyone has equal access to healthcare resources. 30 participants were engaged and sensitized on the local level budget processes, and the decision making spaces --that is from the village planning meetings level to the district planning committees’ level.

As an organization dedicated to supporting our community that faces various



*Captions taken during the football match to commemorate the Day of African Child in Busia*

AGYW, especially those engaging in sex work. We acknowledge that despite the

vulnerabilities, we prioritize intersectionality in all aspects of our work. In the year 2023,

with the support of CREA, we continued to strive to enable our grassroots members living with disability be gender empowered, have better health and combat extreme poverty. This was carried out through livelihood skills training such as in soap making and conducting educational sessions focused on sexual and reproductive health and rights. These sessions further highlighted the significance of contraception for Female sex workers within our community who are living with disabilities. The impact of these sessions was far-reaching, as they attracted the participation of other organizations and partners such as the Public Interest Law Clinic (PILAC) - Makerere University, and Makerere University School of Public Health. Both entities organized a legal camp and sensitization program for our members, aiming to empower them with essential legal knowledge and guidance on reporting pathways.

**Game changer Four: Exploring new**



*Photograph taken after the legal sensitization camp with PILAC*

**partnerships, alliances and coalitions**

2.4) In the same reference year, AWAC set out to embrace synergies and collaborations with open arms. This was an enhancer for the organization to have successful and worthwhile fruitful engagements with her partners supporting her grassroots work in Uganda. We recognize the importance of collaborations and building partnerships to achieve greater impact, and this commitment remained strong during the year of 2023.

The period was marked by valuable partner visits and strategic meetings.

2.3) AWAC, for instance, conducted a visit to the UNHCR Arua offices, engaging in a productive and meaningful discussion on how to enhance collaborative efforts in the field of humanitarian response. This interaction aimed to identify potential areas



of cooperation between AWAC and UNHCR, ultimately leading to more effective and impactful support for marginalized women (such as the women engaging in transaction sex, women living with disability, using/injecting drugs, and affected by displacement).

We had the immense honor of hosting learning and

strategic visits with the donors and partners that are the support propelling the extraordinary work our organization does. **We were privileged to welcome Ms. Deepa, (the vice president of Global Fund for Women)** to Uganda who had an opportunity to witness firsthand the incredible innovations and dedicated efforts of AWAC Uganda in improving accessibility to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services.



*Photograph taken with Ms. Deepa, (the vice president of Global Fund for Women)*

**2.5) AWAC also hosted the team from and the Makerere University school of public health and Mahidol University for a learning visit and discuss the positive influence of our grassroots work in Uganda on SRHR, HIV response among Female Sex Workers, and her contribution on the knowledge production industry.**



*Photograph taken with AWAC, Makerere University school of public health and Mahidol University Team*

**2.6) In addition, we met powerful players in the HIV response coordination in Uganda, including meeting with Dr. Nelson Musoba, Director General — Uganda AIDS Commission. We discussed and solidified the possible areas of collaboration, exchanged information about our past achievements (such as the 22,000 individuals reached with the HIV related services since our inception), and shared valuable insights and past experiences in**

enhancing our collective action in HIV response in Uganda.

**2.6. On another positive note, we had the opportunity to take part in the commemoration of the 247th anniversary of**



**American independence held in collaboration with the US government, as well as our friends and partners.**

The event was filled with joy and excitement as we joined in honoring this significant milestone in American history. AWAC was proud to be a part of this commemoration, which served as a reminder of the importance of maintaining strong relationships with our international partners who invest in our change-making efforts.

**2.7) Our Regional offices and grassroots member organizations also enjoyed opportunities of building and strengthening partnerships in 2023. Our Masaka region Drop-in Centre, hosted CDC Uganda and the Rakai Health Sciences Program. This was a platform to highlight the progress made in addressing HIV epidemic and providing sexual and reproductive health services to female sex the Masaka region --which covers districts such as Masaka, Bukomansimbi, Kyotera, and Rakai.**

**2.8) 2023 was also marked with building bonds with potential and new partners. We welcomed and hosted Ministry of Health, and our new partners in HIV response that is, Reach Out Mbuya for Kampala region, and the Infectious Diseases Institute - Makerere University for Masaka region. The engagements offered AWAC a chance to**

collaborate and discuss our accomplishments and distinct approaches that are driving us towards achieving the global UNAIDS 95-95-95.

**We continued to navigate potential partnerships with international development agencies through extensive and informative meetings with partners and coalitions such as; the team from ACT Alliance at Finn Church Aid. The**



purpose of these engagements were to explore and discuss potential avenues for establishing partnerships between ACT Alliance and AWAC in the realm of humanitarian response. The teams engaged in detailed discussions to identify areas of mutual interest and collaboration, with a focus on leveraging their respective strengths and resources to effectively address and respond to humanitarian crises specifically working in districts of Terego, and Madi Okollo --West Nile.

2.9) During the year we had to bid farewell to our passionate supporters, among these was the former US Ambassador to Uganda, Her Excellency, Ambassador Natalie E. Brown. During this farewell, the



Ambassador commended AWAC for her

dedication in combating violence, specifically highlighting our successful campaigns against gender-based violence like the 16 Days of Activism. It was a bittersweet moment as we expressed gratitude for the Ambassador's acknowledgement of our efforts.

**Game changer Two: Strengthening digital technologies, research, documentation and knowledge management;**

2.10) In sustaining our impact during the year, following the completion of our POWER project two years ago, our team had the opportunity to meet with the



**inspiring members of the Zawadi POWER Club in Ocea A, located within the Rhino camp in Terego.**

This particular Village Savings and Loans Association (VSLA) group was established by resilient women who have been personally affected by displacement. Despite the conclusion of the project, their empowerment continues to thrive and they are actively supporting their livelihoods through the VSLA initiative. This serves as a testament to the sustainability and long-lasting impact of AWAC's efforts in empowering marginalized women.

**Game changer Five: Emerging/ young leaders' capacity building and mindset change for long-term benefits and sustainability.**

Our grassroots work has not only impacted our members in amplifying access to

integrated UHC services, promoting human rights, and social-economic resilience, but the impact has been scaled down to building capacities of other organizations. AWAC's work is impeccable that other actors wish to



*Photograph taken with AWAC and Bright*

learn from us as well as emulate our work. Six grassroots members' organization capacities were enhanced through the different capacity enhancement activities such as exchange learning visits, and peer exchange learning sessions, notable of these organizations, were; Women for Resilience and Health (WoSH) Isingiro, Soroti Women's Health Initiative, Kalangala District Human Rights Advocates, AMA ECORA initiative--Arua, CEMINET Kitgum, and Bright Life Foundation Kitgum.

In 2023, AWAC faced both significant achievements and extreme challenges that

tested our organization's resilience. Towards the end of the year, our Kampala Drop In Centre was given an eviction notice due to discrimination and prejudice (from anti-rights individuals) after the passing of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023. Through rigorous fundraising efforts and support from partners and well-wishers, we are making progress towards finding a permanent home for the center.

While the battle is not yet over, we have withstood the disaster and are on track to provide a safe space for FSWs with multiple vulnerabilities to access reproductive health services and psychosocial support. For more information on our appeal, visit <https://awacuganda.org/appeal-for-support/>

**Game Changer One: Influencing using a human rights-based approach- campaigns and policy briefs among others**

**2.11) We expanded our Journey of SRHR and Gender Based Violence focus through a trajectory of environmental justice.**

Climate change and action has become a global issue. Like all world challenges, they are intersectional in nature affecting adversely the vulnerable populations. That's why we recognize that human health and survival depend on the health and integrity of the whole environment. In 2023, AWAC began to advance climate justice in her SRHR work and as one of her new advocacy priority areas. As growing research indicates the interwovenness of reproductive health along with climate change and gender. During the period of the 16 Days of Activism against gender-based violence, AWAC took action with advocacy on the intersectionality of climate change, Gender based violence and sexual reproductive health of minoritized youth in Terego and Madi-Okollo districts under the Make way Programme in west Nile Uganda. The two districts face a quadrupled challenge of supporting livelihoods for displaced people while protecting the





**Climate change, GBV and SRH awareness raising sessions in Terego and Madi Okollo district during the commemoration of the 16 Days of Activism**

environment, combating GBV and amplifying access to SRHR services for the youths. With support from Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs through Make Way Programme--Uganda, we engaged local leaders, district officials, youths and duty bearers on the significance of prioritizing environmental protection, GBV response and sexual reproductive health and rights in one nexus to reverse and address some of the consequences emanating from environmental damage. Successes included securing more commitments from Office of the Prime Minister (OPM) and other stakeholders for the support people in Imvepi zone --Rhino refugee settlement camp who were facing a floods disaster due to the heavy rains. **The campaign came to a climax through giving dignity hampers to the AGYW and planting over 200 trees with the dual purpose of improving aeration and the overall environment. Additionally, these trees were strategically placed to provide shade for AGYW during their health discussions.** This approach aimed to create an environment conducive to open and comfortable conversations about SRHR, and recognizing the importance of physical surroundings in promoting effective communication.

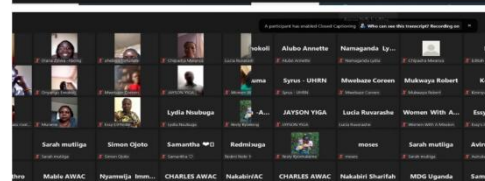
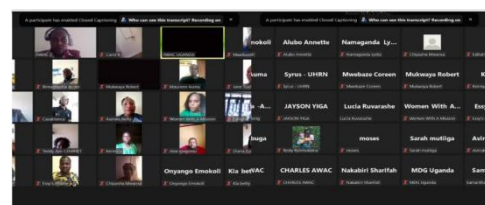
**Objective Three:** To advance SRHR services so that all Female Sex Workers, including those with intersecting and

**compounded vulnerabilities exercise their bodily autonomy, consent and control over their choices and decision.**

3.1) At AWAC we understand the ways in which systems of oppression shrouded in inequalities interweave to create unique dynamics and effects. This is why the essence of our work is to tackle intersecting factors that impede the full enjoyment of SRHR of FSWs. In 2023, we continued to make a conscious effort to ensure that the interventions we use to cater for the multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities of our marginalized members are tailored to their unique needs.

**Game Changer One:** Influencing using a human rights-based approach- campaigns and policy briefs among other

3.2) In the past year, we hosted our inaugural webinar to address the obstacles in accessing Comprehensive Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) services in humanitarian situations, with a specific focus on Terego district. The purpose of the webinar was to highlight the difficulties faced by marginalized Adolescent



Girls and Young Women (AGYW) in obtaining specialized SRHR services. This issue has become more pressing due to the recent surge in humanitarian crises in neighboring countries like the Democratic Republic of the Congo and South Sudan, resulting in an influx of displaced individuals into Uganda. As a result, SRHR indicators have worsened, leading to increased violence against women and girls. This is further exacerbated by harmful gender norms, systemic barriers, and practices that hinder vulnerable women and girls from accessing SRHR services such as family planning, safe abortion, and STI treatment. Our aim is to empower marginalized young women in advocating for their human rights, enabling them to assert their SRH rights and access services in humanitarian settings. We approach this with a an intersectionality lens, and gender perspective to understand the diverse SRHR needs of marginalized AGYW, aiming to produce positive and sustainable outcomes.

**Game changer three: Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;**

### 3.3) What a way to celebrate love on the valentine day!

Whilst most people were sending love to their significant others during Valentines Day, AWAC spread the love throughout Uganda. We organized a national community level dialogue with the aim to improve awareness on modern contraception by young people with intersecting vulnerabilities, CSOs, duty

bearers and district leaders from Terego, Kalangala, Gulu, Mukono, Tororo, and Kampala. During this dialogue, a powerful panel of Health practitioners and young people from diverse walks-of-life explained the truths, myths and their binomial experiences in accessing modern contraception and the broader continuum of SRHR services in their districts. We further utilized visual art to burst the myth on contraception. This event was led by young people who took time to amplify their voices on access to modern contraception and SRHR through mural art painting.

**Game changer Five: Emerging/ young leaders' capacity building and mindset change for long-term benefits and sustainability.**

3.4) **In order to capacitate our grassroots members and important stakeholders,** we conducted a series of refresher trainings with the Community Birth Attendants (CBAs) and FSW leaders from Kyotera, Kampala, Wakiso, Masaka, Busia, and Tororo districts so that they are availed with correct, appropriate, and accurate information on



mechanisms to combat unsafe abortions which they will later pass on to the FSWs in their communities of reach. The participants shared their stories and



Captions above taken during modern contraception dialogue. On the left is Sharon –One of our members with a hearing impairment presenting SRHR issues affecting FSWs living with disability. On the right, is Leah –from FARUG doing mural art painting as a means to spread SRHR information to the road by-passers on Balintuma road. Menao Kamaala



perspectives on the vulnerabilities that force women to the edge, and expose them to making wrong decisions such as; use of the rudimentary unsafe abortion methods to terminate unwanted pregnancies. In addition, as we cultivated mechanisms to build our communities' resilience in health to ably contribute to their livelihood and Uganda's sustainable development, we cascaded our SRHR trainings with empowerment of our grassroots members with SRHR knowledge and economic resilience in Bugiri and Jinja district. This participants' centered learning enabled our grassroots leaders and expert clients to acquire new knowledges, and skills, and share SRHR experiences on sexual reproductive health as a tandem to empowering their communities, and breaking down the SRHR taboos. The capacity building engagements were also pivotal in

3.5) Furthermore, during the year we conducted a training session for healthcare professionals on how to offer and use an inclusive and unbiased approach in providing sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services to female sex workers (FSWs). The training covered topics such as tailored post-abortion care treatment and referral services.

**Game changer three: Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;**

3.6) Green the color of hope. One of our most impactful events, was the National public community based SRHR advocacy rally, which focused on tackling the controversial issues around unsafe abortion in Uganda.



*Caption taken during the National public community SRHR advocacy rally*

enhancing a deep reflection and working towards amplifying our grassroots work in pro-choice SRHR, that is access to modern contraception which is among Uganda's Family Planning 2030 Targets.

This was the first ever green wave solidarity action on prevention of unsafe abortions, led by Female sex workers with feminist organizations, and other human rights organizations in the civil society fraternity in Africa. We engaged communities and stakeholders from different territories-of-power and authoritative positions to spotlight the eminent danger emanating from the continued abandonment of critical SRH issues ruining minoritized women's reproductive and maternal health such as unsafe abortions, and inadequate access to contraception services in Uganda. From this rally, stakeholders continued to acknowledge that reproductive justice is one of the most contested areas of focus in human rights that



has remained cloaked in the society's earlier unconcealed yokes of moral edges and the disruptive shade of the structural marginalization of sexual reproductive health and rights. But if we don't talk about it and merit our attention towards its invisible slow-motion disaster, then who can expose its ever-intensifying danger to reproductive and maternal health of women, especially those at the society's periphery like the female sex workers? Your guess for this unionized corporate responsibility is as good as ours! This rally served as a step in the right direction in as far as spotlighting SRHR particularly maternal mortality and unsafe abortion issues by various stakeholders.

**3.6) In the same year, we hosted SAAF grantee partners in Uganda**—an avenue to share new ideas, experiences, techniques and lasting impact in advancing reproductive health to combat unsafe abortion practices.



*Caption taken during meeting with SAAF Grant Partners in Uganda*

In addition, we were enthused to host Hanna Lindsey-Jones from SAAF. This was a casted-net of opportunity for our team to share on the impact of SAAF support in our sexual reproductive health rights advocacy work. Additionally, we shared on the successes and the ripple effects of the

project as well as the innovative community-based models we apply to achieve our tremendous SRHR results.

**Game changer Four: Exploring new partnerships, alliances and coalitions**

**CSMMUA Annual Retreat**



In 2023, AWAC got an opportunity to share her latest achievements in enhancing accessibility to sexual reproductive health and rights (SRHR) services and advocacy during this year's CSMMUA retreat including utilizing evidence-based approaches and community centric SRHR self-care sustainable strategies.

**3.7) Community Cervical Cancer Awareness Sessions**



Access to integrated and critical SRH information is crucial for grassroots communities. AWAC partnered with Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW) to conduct cervical cancer awareness sessions for our members, including those living with disabilities and those that inject drugs. These awareness raising sessions technically supported by Uganda Cancer Institute

helped to build resilience and expertise on cervical cancer among our community members, peers and staff. We also continued to offer free cervical cancer testing and referrals for grassroots members in Kampala. By identifying and providing such health education tailored to the unique needs of the most left behind marginalized women strongly aligns with our core value of diversity intersectionality and Inclusion,

**Game changer three: Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;**

3.8) Power of Sports in amplifying access to SRHR Information in Tororo and Madi Okollo districts. In 2023, with support from Hivos through the We Lead program and the Dutch Ministry of Foreign of foreign affairs, we conducted a number of advocacy related activities for minoritised youth. One of the capstone events was the jubilant celebration of African Youth Day in a fun, impressive, and impactful manner. Rights holders in Tororo, and Madi Okollo districts organized a football match where tailored SRHR information was provided. The events leveraged using football as a platform to raise awareness about SRHR and



*Caption above taken during commemoration of DAC in Tororo District*



*Caption above taken during commemoration of DAC in Madi Okollo District*

advocating for a grassroots change in access to essential SRHR services.

**3.9) Reflection and Joint Monitoring Exercises with Fellow Community of Action Organizations under the We Lead Program.** We embarked on a joint monitoring through reflection engagements



in the Eastern region, specifically in Tororo district to share with stakeholders on the impact of the We Lead program on the SRHR service access for rights holders in Tororo and Busia District. . We are delighted to report that the meetings had a double effect of strengthening our collaboration and partnerships with the Tororo and Busia district leaderships, together with our fellow Community of Action Organization partners.

**Game Changer One: Influencing using a human rights-based approach- campaigns and policy briefs among others**

3.10) In 2023 we interrogated the root causes of SRHR challenges for minoritised youth through evidence-



*Caption above taken during ICSc Training*

based approaches --where we actively engaged in an extensive training session on Intersectional Sexual Reproductive Health Rights (SRHR) to enhance our understanding and expertise in advocating for comprehensive and inclusive SRHR policies.

### 3.3) Hear from the Young People;

With support from the Make Way Programme through Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO) --Uganda, last year our team and youths from Terego and Madiokolo District were capacitated in social accountability through a training on Intersectional Community Scorecard (ICSc). This was to empower them to advocate for their SRH rights and access to services. We are thrilled to report that ICSc knowledge gained and the youths were able to partially implement this ICSc with minimal technical support from AWAC staff.

Furthermore, we participated in a strategic planning meeting with the partners of the Make Way Programme Uganda --where we solidified our dedication to advancing intersectional SRHR advocacy efforts, and ensuring that the needs and rights of minoritized individuals are adequately addressed and protected.

### Game changer Two: Strengthening digital technologies, research, documentation and knowledge management;

3.5) During the year, in-order to amplify our

grassroots social accountability mechanisms, 3.8) we implemented an intersectional Community scorecard (ICSc) in Terego and Madi-okollo District, specifically in the Rhino Refugee Camp, where we engaged different stakeholders in focus group discussions and Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) to assess the critical barriers affecting the youths in accessing the tailored SRHR services. In the same line, we conducted a budget sensitization dialogue where participants identified the different levels of their involvement in health budgeting, the challenges that impede effective intersectional and responsive gender budgeting including the unique SRH services and information challenges minoritized youth face. Further to note that engaging in this activity enabled us to strengthen our relationship with the districts by conducting courtesy visits to influential power actors and engaging in conversations that encouraged the exploration of priorities related to sexual and reproductive health and rights, climate change mitigation, and the importance of acquiring skills for sustainable livelihoods. The insights gained from these engagements were catalysts in our focus to front rights holders' advocacy issues based on their priorities..

We are thrilled to report that we have harvested great milestones as a result of the intersectional scorecard exercise in terms of; having more health persons being dedicated to the SRHR needs of youth in Terego and



Captions above were taken during the intersectional community scorecard exercise in Terego and Madi Okollo district

Madi-okollo, better spaces that allow youth to be brave and open up about their SRHR needs and the growth in numbers of minoritized youth accessing SRHR information and services from the health centres.

Following the strengthening of our grassroots social accountability mechanisms through the Intersectional community scorecard on SRHR for the young people, AWAC returned to Terego and Madi Okollo districts to monitor the fulfilled commitments at the health facilities in the late 2023.

### Impact of the Intersectional Community Scorecard

We registered a number of success stories after our advocacy engagements with the youths and the duty bearers through the Intersectional Community Scorecard such as; there is now an art room/Private room in Ocea Health Centre II where HIV testing and counselling is done, the facility also went ahead to bring on board a counsellor that sits in the counselling room to offer counselling services to young people.

***After, our engagement to improve the youth friendly services, the turn up of the youths has increased from 90 to between 120-150 on Sundays for the SRH counselling engagements,*** likewise in Ofua Health Centre III, there is now one more part-time language translator. The facility has



*Monitoring Committee meeting*

additionally assigned a doctor that help specifically youths that come up for

treatment from the age of 12-22 years on daily basis.

**Objective Four:** To strengthen the economic security and social protection of female sex workers and other marginalized women and girls.

**Game changer three:** Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;

### Economic resilience in Crisis

**4.1)** We acknowledge that a key component of realizing human rights is having economic resilience and social protection. In the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic and an Ebola epidemic which left our members devastated economically, 2023 saw AWAC shift her focus towards building resilience of grassroots members socioeconomically in a comprehensive manner, especially following the economic devastation caused by the Ebola epidemic. We prioritized economic empowerment by conducting a series of skill-building sessions to empower seven CHELG groups in Kampala, Wakiso, Masaka, Kassanda, and Mubende Districts. These sessions focused on leadership skills, group formation, conflict resolution, and financial literacy, with the aim of enabling the groups to not only survive but also thrive. As a result of these efforts, we are pleased to announce the formation of three new CHELGs, including Kamu Kamu CHLEG, Never Give Up, and Tweyambe Women's Development groups. These endeavours mark a significant step towards enhancing the socioeconomic well-being of our members and fostering a more resilient and empowered community.

Through the post Ebola awareness dialogues in the districts that were hit worst by the epidemic such as; Mubende and Kassanda, we continued to put the emphasis on building socioeconomic resilience for FSWs through the use of CHELGS. Community leaders recognized and embraced the comradeship spirit of sharing experiences on how to build the resilience of marginalized populations such as the FSWs so as to thrive in the face of an adversity. At these convenings, our community grassroots

members shared on the impact of amplifying the Community Health and Livelihoods Enhancement groups CHLEGs expansion in Mubende and Kassanda district. The impact of these groups formed included, improved saving culture, enhanced behavioural change and strengthened social cohesion among the grassroots FSWs, their communities, and leaders. We are thrilled to report that the tangible accomplishments of these dialogues encompassed, the secured commitments of support from the Mubende

financial independence in future. These were equipped with skills in tailoring, and confectionery work that can provide them with multiple skills, including baking techniques, recipe development, and business management which will help them build their own ventures. In addition to providing these practical skills, the trainings boosted the girls' confidence and self-esteem especially those in sex work settings—a catalyst for the AGYW to overcome fears



*Captions taken during the CHLEG sessions in Kassanda, Mubende, Masaka and Kampala*

Residential District Commissioner's office who granted ten (10) sponsored study slots to female sex workers every six months as part of the Presidential Industrial Training Initiative.

Our economic resilience interventions were also cascaded to Adolescent Girls and Young Women (AGYW) who currently face a growing disproportion of negative reproductive health outcomes including HIV infections and unsafe abortions in Uganda.

**During the year we continued to empower marginalised AGYW by equipping them with valuable skills through the Girls' Action Clubs livelihood empowerment skills activities to gain**

and doubts about their abilities.

**Objective Five:** To strengthen a resilient female sex workers' movement to leverage on their capacities to demand for an enabling environment, equitable services and hold duty bearers accountable on existing development programmes.

**Game changer Four:** Exploring new partnerships, alliances and coalitions

**5.1) From small beginnings to a thriving and progressive grassroots network!**

As an organization, we salute and are deeply indebted to those who have journeyed with us from our humble beginnings to date. One such ally that has supported our growth is American Jewish World Service (AJWS). We were honored to host the AJWS team to witness the impact of their partnership in transforming our grassroots communities. In our 8-year journey, we attest to the fact that, what started as a group of structurally marginalized women with a dream of an organized network has become a thriving grassroots network that stands tall and proudly transforming communities. During the AJWS' visit, we shared on the impact of our partnership with them, part of which are the established CHLEGs structures in

awareness of social economic issues on a larger scale through global activism movements. We were delighted to host



*Caption taken during the PHM Uganda visit to AWAC*

Peoples Health Movement Uganda chapter of People's Health Movement global —to discuss possible future collaborations.



*Captions above were taken during the AJWS Team visit to AWAC*

Mubende, Kassanda, Kampala, and Masaka districts.

**5.2) Courtesy visit from PHM --Uganda. We can amplify grassroots advocacy groups' voices, causes and raising**

**Game changer Five:** Emerging/ young leaders' capacity building and mindset change for long-term benefits and sustainability.

### 5.3) Capacity building for the District Community Rights Advocates (DiCRAs)

After the training workshop with the DiCRAs on, movement building, grassroots social accountability, human rights, safety and security, intersectionality, and gender, there was gained knowledge but also changed perceptions on how they could comprehend issues surrounding gender. They further had better appreciation of safety and security — by recognizing the evolving context on human rights and safety after the enactment of the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023 in Uganda. Three DiCRAs from Arua submitted that the legislated Act has affected detrimentally the Female sex workers in Arua district. The religious, cultural and law enforcers perceive that female sex workers are merchants of immortality and practice LGBTI activities. Further to recognize that, DiCRA, conceptualized better the importance of community mental health and psychosocial support. They spotlighted some of the signs (such as: depression, anxiety, suicidal thoughts, and stress) their friends had but they couldn't help them. They went ahead incorporate community mental health and psychosocial support as another area of focus in their routine documentation and

reporting. Whilst, there is need to educate the DiCRAs on scalable psychological interventions such as the the World Health Organization 's self-help plus, and problem management plus which will help the DiCRAs to work as para-counselors or para-psychosocial support structures. These courses will enable DiCRAs to screen, identify and respond to mental health and psychosocial support needs in their peers/friends in their respective district communities.

#### Impact of this DiCRA capacity building

In addition, after this capacity enhancement engagement for the DiCRAs, CEMINET Kitgum held a social accountability dialogue of police officers, healthcare professionals, and local leaders that brought together 60 female sex workers, with the aim was to address the issue of ongoing violence against women Posed by the AGUU boys - the former child soldiers of the rebel Joseph Koni. Likewise, following their participation in the DiCRA empowerment sessions, the female sex work DiCRAs in Arua took a stand and led the initiation of a petition calling for the removal of the Resident City Commissioner (RCC), Ms. Alice Akello, who



*During the capacity building sessions for the DiCRAs.*



was known for being opposed to the rights of sex workers. that came around pledged to provide support from their positions of power. This walk and petition were to oust the current RCC in the FSWs' efforts to work with the community to remove bad anti-rights leaders in order to improve service delivery and boost the security of the community members. This petition was not only to address the issue of the RCC but also the Lord Mayor and the DPC who the society has the FSWs and the community accused of carrying on security operations that are targeting harmless civilians such as sex workers. This petition gained momentum and eventually reached the State House in Kampala.

On another delighting note, the DiCRAs model has proved to be a learning environment for enhancing the socioeconomic resilience of our grassroots members. A prime example is the Bakyara Kweterana DiCRA group in Isingiro, who utilized the CHLEG model to save money and established a tent rental business.



*Caption above is the house with the tent and plastic chair equipment that were bought by the Bakyara Kweterana DiCRA group in Isingiro to support their tent rental business*

Furthermore, they have achieved a significant milestone by purchasing a house to store their tent equipment, chairs, tarps, and catering tools, which is an exciting development. Further to note that the Isingiro DiCRAs also signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Isingiro District local government to strengthen collaborations between government and FSWs.

We are also excited to inform you about the impact of our social accountability engagements through the safe motherhood dialogues, and most vivid of these was; after engaging with the district authorities in Kitgum district during the safe motherhood community Barazza, the district agreed to allow female sex workers to participate in the annual district planning meetings. This would enable them to contribute their perspectives and ideas to empower women, improve access to sexual reproductive health services, and provide other essential services for women in the district. This commitment was fulfilled, as one of the DiCRA leaders, Ms. Ayo Teddy, attended the Kitgum municipal council budget consultative



*Caption above is the Kitgum municipal council budget consultative workshop conference for the financial year 2024/2025 on October 27th, 2023 which Ms. Ayo Teddy –DiCRA attended.*

workshop conference for the financial year 2024/2025 on October 27<sup>th</sup>, 2023. This is a significant achievement as it demonstrates sub-national leadership recognizing the involvement of DiCRAs in budget processes. In this meeting, Teddy advocated for support for female sex worker groups in the district's empowerment programs, and her request was accepted by the district for her two groups, "Golden Women United" and "Mon-pe-mimo group", to be supported in the upcoming year 2024/2025 under the the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP).

**Game changer Four: Exploring new partnerships, alliances and coalitions**

**5.4) Multi-stakeholder dialogue on the roles and guidelines of Human Rights Defenders in harnessing synergies to enhance access to justice, healthcare, and social cohesion.**

Given the evolving context and the shrinking space for the rights promotion fraternity and the need to protect and galvanize the work of human rights defenders, AWAC Uganda with support from the [Marianne Initiative through Embassy of France to Uganda](#) organized a Multi-stakeholder dialogue that focused on building a strong rapport between local authorities and Human Rights Defenders

(HRDs), and understanding the HRDs' guidelines that are applicable to their work given the current context. The dialogue was a safe space to sensitize 55 human rights defenders (HRDs), authorities and human rights organizations/ institutions from 13 districts in Uganda on the practical guidelines regarding the protection of human rights defenders. Further, the discussion incorporated the Rights and responsibilities of the HRDs and local leaders, and most importantly, how the HRDs and local leaders can work together to address the violations and accelerate access to justice, health and other services critical to the marginalized women such as the female sex workers, women with disabilities, women living with HIV, migrant



*Captions above: Multi-stakeholders' dialogue.*

refugee, women and women who use and inject drugs.

**Game Changer One:** Influencing using a human rights-based approach- campaigns and policy briefs among others

### 5.5) Healing and Letting Go

16 Days of Activism is a time we honour and salute the resilient women who have survived heinous acts of Gender-based violence. In 2023 we partnered with our friend and partner, [Women's Probono Initiative \(WPI\)](#), to organize a healing space which created a safe haven where



*Caption taken during the healing space session*

grassroots survivors shared their painful but victorious stories to heal together and forge ways to demand justice. We observed that there is a dire need for a safe space --which is stemming from the recognition that grassroots female sex work leaders are continually subjected to various forms of violence due to their commitment to challenging societal norms and advocating for justice in the sex work movement in Uganda. Their courageous efforts in organizing and mobilizing for change has made them targets for violence perpetrated by clients, law enforcement personnel, and members of the community who view their work as immoral or illegal. Despite the invaluable contributions they make, their safety, mental health, and overall well-being are continuously compromised. In this engagement, participants committed to never to stay silent when violence escalates against marginalized women —and stand

together to empower each other, and demand a world free from violence and deepening the bond of sisterhood.

**Game changer three:** Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;

### 5.6) Our Participation in the recent 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and People's Right (ACHPR) –that took place in Arusha, Tanzania

In 2023 AWAC had an immense honor to participate in the recent 77th Ordinary Session of the African Commission on Human and People's Right (ACHPR) –that took place in Arusha, Tanzania a space that brings together State Parties to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights, Organs of the African Union, National Human Rights Institutions, International Organizations, Non-Governmental Organizations and other stakeholders from a multiplicity of disciplines to follow up on the status of observance of human rights in the African Union member states on the continent, that ratified the African Charter and its protocols on Human and People's Rights. During our attendance, we explored



*Pictures above were taken during the 77th Ordinary Session of ACHPR in Arusha*

how far-reaching these regional processes and discussions on human rights observance respond to local, and regional contexts and priorities, and how far states and other relevant stakeholders' implement, comply with and are publicly accountable to different protocols of the African Charter. During this regional review of Uganda's human rights record and implementation of the Maputo Protocol at ACHPR, AWAC recognized that that Uganda was the fourth country to report on the Maputo protocol since its ratification in 2010. In spite this commendable practice in line with the Article 26 of the Protocol that states *"States Parties shall ensure the implementation of this Protocol at national level, and in their periodic reports submitted in accordance with Article 62 of the African Charter, indicate the legislative and other measures undertaken for the full realisation of the rights therein "*, the report did not elaboratively include the country's situation and its status on; available progressive substantial measures to change the practices emanating from patriarchy, legal program to promote the women's access to justice, affirmative action such as, percentage of women in decision making positions --both appointed and elected (which is key as recommended in Article 9 of the Protocol, that strongly emphasize the Right of women to Participate in the Political and decision-making processes.

Further to note that, there was no evidence of how the established national GBV database can support the high levels of judicature --such as supporting the high courts, and more-so how this can be utilized to investigate and address the digital violence. Sad to note that the government of Uganda continued to maintain its reservations on some of the Articles (such as 14 (1) (a) on "the right of women to control their fertility"; and (2) (c) "protect the reproductive rights of women by authorizing medical abortion in cases of sexual assault, rape, incest, and where the continued pregnancy endangers the mental and physical health of the mother or the life of the mother or the foetus") of the Maputo Protocol

regarding women's rights and, measures to promote the women rights. When the country continues to maintain such prejudices on the Articles, this shows its repudiation from its obligations to implement the Protocol and a total disconnect and blind eye to the unsafe abortions that contribute (28%-33%) to the Uganda's high maternal mortality rates, and therefore a violation of human rights, in particular the right to health. Following the session AWAC wrote a blog on What we need to know and learn from regional and global discussions, and how do we connect local experiences to regional human rights debates in the recent concluded 77th Ordinary Session of African Commission on Human and People's Rights. Link to the blog can be found here; <https://us21.campaign-archive.com/>. AWAC has also further gone ahead to apply for an observer status with ACHPRs.

**Game changer Five:** Emerging/ young leaders' capacity building and mindset change for long-term benefits and sustainability.

### 5.7) Create awareness about human trafficking, and gender-based violence (GBV) through 16 Days of Activism in Tororo district



Gender-based violence adversely affects adolescent girls and young women who are some of the most vulnerable groups in society. During the 2023 16 Days of Activism, the We Lead team at AWAC joined partners for an intergenerational dialogue in Tororo District. The purpose of this event was to

commemorate the conclusion of the 16 days of activism campaign and to create awareness about human trafficking, and gender-based violence (GBV)—specifically in border districts. District leaders in attendance made commitments to collaborate with organizations like AWAC to end all forms of GBV that affect minoritized youths in Tororo.

**Game changer three: Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;**

5.8) During the year, AWAC also participated in the 5<sup>th</sup> Health Financing Conference 2023 convened by civil society in Uganda. This conference brought together leaders and activists to map ways on how to prioritise health. This comes after the government defaulting on its pledge in the Abuja Protocol obligations for a minimal investment of a 15% allocation of the national budget to health. This is characterized by the heavy out of pocket catastrophic expenditures in Uganda. On this platform, our Team Leader, Ms. Kyomya Macklean shared on how the AWAC CHELG has been an innovative financial venture that has bridged the inequalities that characterize the heavy out of pocket healthcare in Uganda which stands at 46% of the overall health expenditure.



*Caption: Ms. Kyomya Macklean –Team Leader AWAC, representing us at the 5<sup>th</sup> Health Financing Conference*

**Objective Six:** To strengthen the institutional capacity of AWAC and her network members to effectively deliver the strategic plan.

In 2023, our organization learned the importance of strengthening our institution and empowering our members in the face of a shrinking civic space. This realization prompted AWAC to take decisive actions to build a robust and resilient organization. Throughout the year, we made significant strides in achieving our strategic objectives, gaining substantial momentum in the process. This progress has reinforced our commitment to fortifying our organization and empowering our members to navigate and overcome the challenges posed by the evolving legal environment that is constraining the civic space.

**Game changer three: Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;**

### 6.1) Dreams of a brighter Future

We acknowledge that when there is no clear vision, institutions and people perish when challenges assail them. With a meticulous process of consulting our grassroots members, partners, Board of Directors, staff as well as other stakeholders on what an ideal future for FSWs with multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities would look like, AWAC developed and launched her 2024-2028 strategic plan, known as Compass 2028. This plan takes into account the knowledge, experiences, and best practices gained from the previous years.

The launch was graced by Ms. Mary Borgman —PEPFAR Country Coordinator, who acknowledged the commendable work and impact of communities in HIV response through the effort of grassroots partners such as AWAC. The event was highly lauded positively by our grassroots members along with the board and secretariat who endorsed the Strategic plan – a dream once achieved will take Sex Work movement to a whole new level. The Strategy highlights dreams of amplified advocacy for FSWs with multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities, rapid socioeconomic empowerment and stronger feminist movement as well as institutional building which we eagerly anticipate accomplishing. The plan has streamlined the

different governance and management levels of the organization as explained below;

**At the Governance level;** There was establishment of a Board of Trustees (BoT), with appointment of a new Board of Directors (BoD). We recognize the phenomenal strategic leadership of the outgoing Board and their relentless service to AWAC.

**At the Management Level;** The strategic plan projects occupied positions of the two Deputy Executive Director, a Management Team – comprised of Directors and Managers. The plan also envisages the offices of the Directors to head the Directorates that support the planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of AWAC's 5 Domains of Change and Programs of Work.

**At the Programmatic Level;** the Strategic plan introduces six domains of change and programs of work Programme, that is-

- 1) *Network and Movement Building,*
- 2). *Access to Services,*
- 3). *Advocacy Lobbying & Influence Policy Development,*
- 4). *Research and Knowledge Management*
- 5). *Strengthening Capacity to contribute to the SDGs, Skills Development and Economic Empowerment, and*
- 6). *Organizational Development and Sustainability.*

**Game changer three:** Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;

**6.2) On sustainability of the AWAC and its network members, the sustainability work** of the organization was top on the agenda of 2023. A key aspect of this sustainability work was the acquisition of two parcels of land - **one in Luwero town measuring 24 acres,** and the other in Mengo Kampala measuring **29 decimals in size.** These pieces of land will be utilized by AWAC to establish and construct buildings that will support the livelihood projects and ventures of its members. This initiative is part of the organization's larger goal to create a HUB of

Holistic Transformation (HHOT), where



*Caption above are the 24 acres of land that were purchased in Luweero Town.*



*Caption above are the 29 decimals of land that were purchased in Mengo –Kampala*

members can access the resources needed

to improve their lives and communities. By investing in physical infrastructure that can facilitate these projects, AWAC is demonstrating its commitment to the long-term success and sustainability of its network members.

### **6.3) Annual General Meeting (AGM) 2023**

As is AWAC custom AWAC conducted the Annual General Meeting, a convening that brought together our grassroots members from all over Uganda to honor and extol the triumphs as well as gains reached by our



*Picture above taken during the 2023 AGM*

grassroots members in various spheres of empowerment. The remarkable moment as was characterized by the appointment of a new team of Board members to ensure effective and strategic governance of the AWAC. We take a moment to express our heartfelt gratitude for the outstanding service rendered by the preceding board under the leadership of Ms. Patricia Kimera.

#### 6.4) Vibrant Governance

Part of a thriving organization is having robust governance structures that guarantee sustainability. The AWAC board was indeed a stabilizing presence amidst all challenging realities that happened in 2023. The board actively engaged in ensuring the organization was moving within the confines of its strategy whilst being accountable to its constituency. The board contributed to the formulation of the new strategic plan and met quarterly to ensure things were on track. We are also grateful that during the unprecedented deep crisis moments the board was swift and very present lending all

#### Game changer three: Strategic positioning, repositioning and alignment;

6.5) Showcasing the impact of Drop-in Centres as a community innovation in amplifying access to health services for sex workers through NASWD 6. During the commemoration of International Human Rights Day, AWAC held the annual National Sex Workers Dialogue (NASWD6). This event took a unique and positive turn in that it was community based, gathering over 280 participants. The event brought pertinent health and legal services to our grassroots members through a Health and Legal Aid Camp. In the same space, AWAC showcased the significance of the community innovations such as the AWAC Drop in-Centres across the country in amplifying access to integrated HIV and SRHR services, and economic empowerment to over 32,000 marginalized women such as sex workers in Uganda in the past 8 years of her existence. During the camp, some of our members noted that stigma and societal biases faced by sex workers have posed significant barriers to



*Health and Legal Aid Camp during the 2023 National Annual Sex Workers' Dialogue*

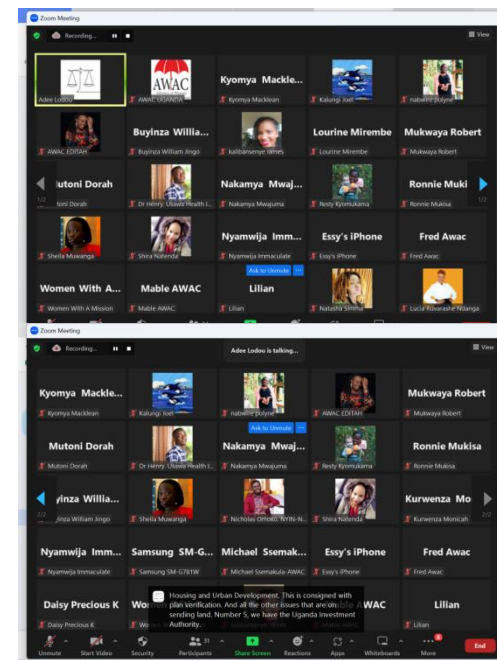
that is possible to avert and address challenges.

accessing healthcare services. However, the establishment of the AWAC Drop-in

centres across Uganda, has facilitated a support system that help FSWs to overcome life's challenges --which highlight the transformative roles DiCs play in the lives of our grassroots members. Details of NASWD can be found on this newsletter link; <https://us21.campaign-archive.com/?u=67f38fc78b04ffb136efdf6ba&id=c3b77004e9>

**Game changer Four: Exploring new partnerships, alliances and coalitions**

**6.6) The year immersed us into another focus of contributing to the academia world and nurturing new and potential talents** in the humanitarian sphere through our volunteership programme. We hosted 10 Interns from the Public Interest Law Clinic (PILAC), and 2 from the Medical College of Wisconsin (MCW). The interns found the experience life changing, wholesome and worthwhile. As students who are getting to the internship stage of their studies this experience gave them a practical avenue to develop and improve their legal research and writing skills as well as their presentation, communication skills and mentorship from highly experienced staff. Team work ethos and Luganda speaking skills were also imparted. As AWAC we are grateful for the valuable contribution they made to our organization especially the design of the FSW rights handbook and in collaboration with the Uganda NGO Bureau hosting a webinar "Navigating the Pitfalls of Compliance in the context of Female Sex Work led grassroots and CSOs" which greatly assisted grassroots leaders, members and other participants gain knowledge on key legislation regarding NGO obligations as well as the legal issues around compliance. It was a pleasure giving them soft skills. From their shared internship experience, at first some of them were skeptical and critical, such feelings emanating from their moral religious backgrounds that view sex work as a taboo. Whilst, this changed once the interns started coin their work through seeing first-hand



*Webinar on Navigating the Pitfalls of Compliance*

experience through a series of field work and community hands-on work. This opened their



*Picture above taken with AWAC team with Medical College of Wisconsin CW graduate students (Rhadika, Madelyn-Master Students, and Arthur -Ph'D Student)*



*Picture above taken with AWAC team with PILAC Internship Students*



human lenses --to see people in their diversity as human beings first deserving dignity and respect of their persona, not to be biased as well as quick to judge.

**Quotes from interns;**

**Quote one:**

*“Working with a whole new group of persons was the most outstanding experience for me. I had always seen FSWs as the unacceptable characters in society but this internship opened my eyes to a whole new experience.” --Buyinza William Jingo*



Buyinza William Jingo in a green circle

**Quote Two:**

*“My work experience with AWAC was quite thrilling as well as exposing. I was exposed to settings that I’ve never been to before, and these challenges my notions and my lengths. The entire experience was beautiful and wholesome and I learnt a lot out of it.” – Adee Prudence Lodou*



Adee Prudence Lodou in a green circle

**Quote Three:**

*“My experience working with AWAC was fruitful. it was a great learning experience for me and I got invaluable life lessons from it that I most probably would not have gotten elsewhere. I had the chance to witness how challenging life can be for some minority groups and why it is important for us to take on a collective role as a society to see that this justice is done. The most memorable encounter for me was the meeting I had with the AGYWs where we had one on one interviews and I got to hear experiences that clearly demonstrated how far the system of governance in Uganda has let these young girls down. They had been forced to fend for themselves in a world that has been very unfair to them. This opened my eyes and was a landmark moment for me in working with AWAC.”-- Siima Musinguzi Reagan*



Siima Musinguzi Reagan in a green circle

**Quote Four:**

*“AWAC, is such a comfortable home for all. I loved going there every time. Hospital workmates and so jovial. Keep it up and thank you for the great chance to learn from you. I would love to express my utmost appreciation for your inspiring work advocating for the rights of sex workers. Your commitment to destigmatizing sex work, promoting safer conditions, and empowering*

sex workers is commendable. I witnessed the dedication of your team and the impact you make. I would highly recommend AWAC to anyone seeking to support an organization at the forefront of positive change. Thank you for the honor of being a part of AWAC, and I'm confident you will continue making a significant impact in the lives of sex workers”  
**--Aculera Maimunah.**

**Game Changer One:** Influencing using a human rights-based approach- campaigns and policy briefs among others

### 6.7) Workplace Rejuvenation

It is quite easy and often the case that as advocates and activists the passion for the causes close to our hearts consume our beings and we neglect to be kind to ourselves and revitalize ourselves. AWAC strongly recognize that the health and wellness of our staff and volunteers is an essential aspect of our institution. It's not only benefiting our individual staff but also contributing to the overall productivity and success of the AWAC to ably contribute to transforming the female sex worker community in Uganda. wilderness walk at our Hub of Holistic Transformation in Luwero and the festive celebration of our 8th Birthday anniversary of effecting transformational impact in our grassroots communities through art and meditation. In addition, we had an impressionable joint wellness session on mental health with our partner and member organization, Golden



Aculera Maimunah in a green circle



Captions taken during the staff wellness sessions

Centre for Women Rights organized on Mental Health Day in line with the theme "Mental Health is Universal Health Care" where we illustrated our support for each other and the bond of sisterhood which fosters mental resilience. These sessions went a long way in assisting our people adopt healthy habits along with behaviors, fostering a strengthened and connected team as well as contributing to an overall productive institution.



*Caption: Mental Health Day celebration through a wellness session with our sisters – Golden Centre for Women's Rights*

**Game changer Five:** Emerging/ young leaders' capacity building and mindset change for long-term benefits and sustainability.

### 6.8) Nurturing Capacities through Staff professional development

In 2023 our staff size grew from 26 to 29, demonstrating our commitment to expanding our human capital and expertise. This expansion has equipped us with the resources and talents necessary to drive our mission forward and make a lasting impact in the communities we serve. We are delighted to note that we didn't only grow in size, our staffs' careers were also on the path of growth. Some of our staffs completed their courses in the Lawyering profession, some enrolled for postgraduate education for example in Public health, and Management courses, others were further supported through learning retreats (organized by our partners such as AWDF, SAAF, IDI-Masaka

region and UKPC) to grow their on-job skills in the profession practice lines of; Monitoring Evaluation and Learning, Resource mobilization, finance and data management. We also participated in the CQUIN Meeting



*Caption; CQUIN Meeting Delegated in Nairobi*

in Nairobi that happened earlier in the year. We further took part in the We Lead program evidence and impact-based advocacy training organized by FEMNET in Nairobi. Through these capacity building workshops; our staff were empowered with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively assess advocacy and empowerment programs. This empowerment has enabled them to bring about positive change in our advocacy programming through continuous tracking of the results documented and reported something that continues in 2024.

Much as the staff team grew, two of our staff also went for long sick leaves. One got a nasty motorcycle accident and the other chronic body illness. This was a lesson to us



*Group Picture taken at the AWDF MEL retreat where AWAC participated*

to establish an insurance package in the upcoming financial year due to the heavy out-of-pocket expenditures that were incurred by both the staff and the organization in footing the hospital bills.

### **6.8)6.9) In Improving our Monitoring, Evaluation, Learning and Financial Systems,**

Through the organization capacity strengthening through the MEL workshop, and Resource mobilization boot camps (supported by our partners such as AWDF) happened in Accra-Ghana, the AWAC Monitoring, Evaluation, and Learning (MEL) and Knowledge Management officers were empowered with the necessary skills and knowledge to effectively assess advocacy and empowerment programs.

#### **Impact for this capacity building for MEL**

This empowerment has enabled them to bring about positive change in our advocacy programs through continuous tracking of the results reported on by the DiCRAs and FSWs. Case-in-line, we strengthened our monthly performance review check-in meetings with the District Community Rights Advocates (DiCRAs), expert clients, and peer educators. During these meetings, we have focused on building the capacities of the DiCRAs, peers and expert clients in results-based documentation and reporting. This is to ensure that outcomes and indicators essential for amplifying the projects' impact are properly captured and communicated on. This has also been a demonstration of AWAC's commitment to evidence-based programming and learning through identifying the areas of success and areas for improvement. This information will further be used to refine and strengthen future interventions, ultimately leading to greater positive change in the grassroots female sex work's movement building in Uganda. We have also started to invest in building a culture of learning and continuous improvement to ensure that the organization remains accountable and responsive to the needs of the community it serves, and a testament to AWAC's dedication to grassroots evidence-based decision-making and program impact maximization.

### **6.10) Strengthened Communications and Media Engagements**

We continued to invest in our programmes visibility throughout the year but also supporting visibility of our grassroots members' work. Here we amplified the online communication of four grassroots members. Some of these were supported to open up twitter/X-platform handles that can support them in communicating their advocacy work. Below are the names of the grassroots member organizations and their handles opened;

**6.11) As part of collectives and movements, there is an immense strength in numbers. AWAC actively took part in workshops and meetings by different organisations in order to strengthen capacity as well as exchange best practices with fellow CSOs and partners. Most notable of these included, the RMNACH+N and GBV Forum Meetings --**

where we discussed our critical SRHR priorities that can make the platform stronger. Priorities included, resource mobilization, capacity building, and impactful advocacy strategies to address the predicament of GBV.

Further to recognize that AWAC's invaluable contribution this movement resulted in our Team leader **Ms.Kyomya Macklean** being elected as the Chairperson of the Reproductive Health Forum of the RMNCAH+N Platform.

**6.12) We also participated in a policy and advocacy training for FSWs with IAVI and joined CSOs in a Budget Accountability Dialogue** following commitments made towards improving family planning commodity experience and accountability. We further participated in the SMART Advocacy training held by SRHR Alliance with the aim to better equip CSOs with skills to implement result yielding advocacy on sexual reproductive health issues.

**Practicing Inclusion: Sex Workers living with disabilities**



*Captions above show the various empowerment sessions done for our members living with disabilities. These started a soap production business. The soap is made in different quantities.*

In line with our core value of intersectionality, and inclusion, AWAC prides herself into the empowerment initiatives undertaken with FSWs living with disability which continued in 2023 with heartwarming results. FSWs with disability were empowered on weekly basis to acquire comprehensive knowledge on their reproductive rights, financial literacy, legal skills on human rights which have enabled them to take control of their lives. Such interventions have been pivotal and catalysts in enabling our members to

undertake business ventures i.e. in soap producing. The incomes earned have enabled them to form a savings group which enabled them to contribute to AWAC's relocation plan following an unjust and forced eviction in late 2023. We are appreciative of the amazing people who have played crucial role in grounding our disability program for our members with speech and hearing impairment to address poverty and have better health and wellbeing.

## 7. Innovations

7.1) During the year we expanded the use of CHLEGs as one of the models to amplify access to socioeconomic services for the grassroots FSWs. This was integrated across three of our new programmes --which has supported improvement of the livelihood skills and retention of our members on essential SRHR services they receive from our safe spaces or DiCs.

7.2) Established the Districts community Rights advocates model which has been central in improving the advocacy skills of our grassroots members, and enhancing their participation on social accountability and decision-making spaces case-in-line,

after engaging with the district authorities in Kitgum district during the safe motherhood community Barazza, the district agreed to allow female sex workers to participate in the annual district planning meetings. This would enable them to contribute their perspectives and ideas to empower women, improve access to sexual reproductive health services, and provide other essential services for women in the district. This commitment was fulfilled, as one of the DiCRA leaders, Ms. Ayo Teddy, attended the Kitgum municipal council budget consultative workshop conference for the financial year 2024/2025 on October 27th. This is a significant achievement as it demonstrates sub-national leadership recognizing the involvement of DiCRAs in budget processes, aligning with Section 9 (1) of the Uganda Public Financial Management Act 2015 (Amended). Teddy advocated for support for female sex worker groups in the district's empowerment programs, and her request was accepted by the district for her two groups, "Golden Women United" and "Mon-pe-mimo group", will be supported in the upcoming year 2024/2025 under the the Uganda Women Entrepreneurship Program (UWEP).

Further to note that, through the DiCRAs, a series of safe motherhood advocacy activities were conducted in Arua, Kalangala, Kitgum, Isingiro and Soroti. This was



*Some of the DiCRA members from Kalangala District receiving a CHLEG saving kit to support their economic empowerment activities during their grassroots advocacy work.*



*Some of the pictures from the community safe motherhood dialogues.*

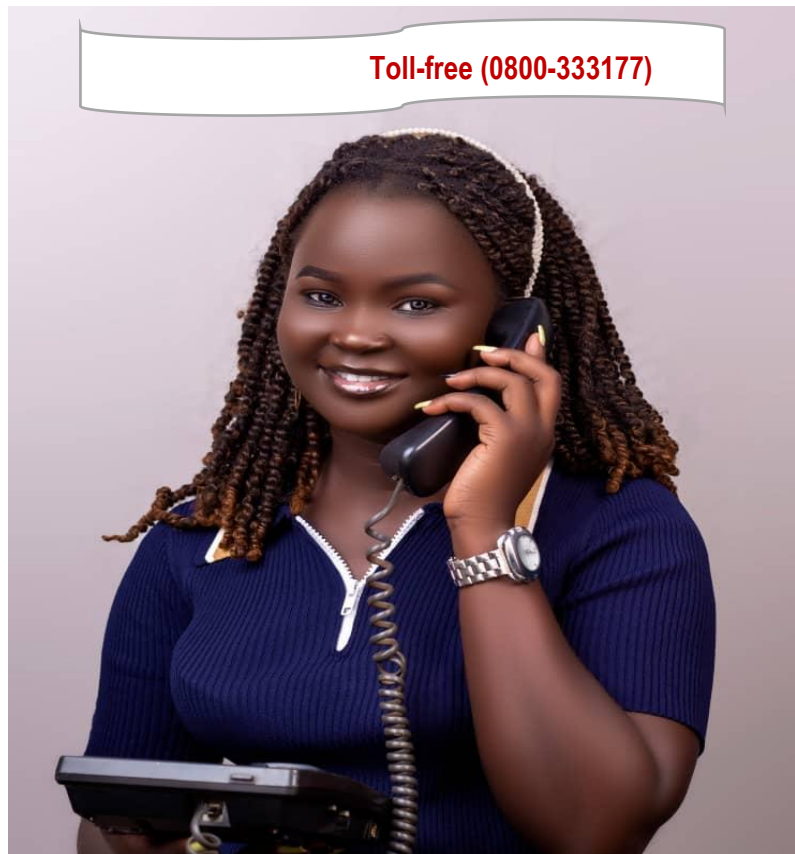
intended to attract power actors' action on improving access to safe motherhood services such as access to contraception services, pre and post-natal care among others. In addition, the dialogues, entailed engaging the duty bearers and leaders from political arm at different levels of authority in districts—who recognized that safe motherhood is a fundamental right that should be accessible to all women, including grassroots female sex workers with multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities. It was exciting to hear from some of the leaders being pro-choice but also appreciated the work we ought to do in unison as a community to bring more leaders aboard and advocate for safe motherhood in its diverse measures. It is crucial to emphasize the importance of choice when it comes to safe motherhood among female sex workers because of the numerous unique challenges and stigma they face.

**7.3) Used a Toll-Free Helpline for psychosocial support and documenting**

also supported **256 Phone calls** for follow up & psychosocial support especially for FSWs newly initiated on ART and PrEP. The line has further supported over 450 responses of human rights abuses in 2023.

**Digitalizing our Grassroots community**

Collaborating with local communities is an effective and fulfilling approach in tackling crises. During the year following the Ebola outbreak in Mubende, Kassanda, Kampala, Wakiso, and Masaka, this approach proved successful. We provided iPads to female sex work community leaders for the CHLEGs and boda boda chairpersons, such as for Kassanda North Boda boda Association. The iPads facilitated data collection on important areas like public health emergencies, HIV/SRHR, economic resilience, and mental health. This further strengthened our relationship with the grassroots female sex work CHLEG leaders, and the bodaboda structures —which has some of our CAHIVPLUS CLM Monitors. The iPads have additionally supported the documentation of the impact of Ebola on HIV/SRHR, mental health, and economic resilience. We also extended this digital access to our District Community Rights Advocates (DiCRAs) operating in five districts in Uganda. These have helped them monitor the human rights landscape in their districts especially as it relates to FSWs with multiple and intersecting vulnerabilities so as to make duty bearers accountable and push



**446 GBV** cases as well as referrals. This

for a society where FSWs are free from human rights abuses.



*The photographs above, the CAHIV PLUS Community monitors and the DiCRAs were given iPads to support their work in communities. This was also to contribute to AWAC's digitalization agenda in grassroots communities.*



One of the super moments of the year was the unforgettable launch of our strategic plan 2024-2028. Check the pictures below

When access to healthcare is linked to moral-centric and non-progressive laws and policies, then it becomes a life-



Captions: moments during the strategic plan launch.

## Publications and Media Appearances

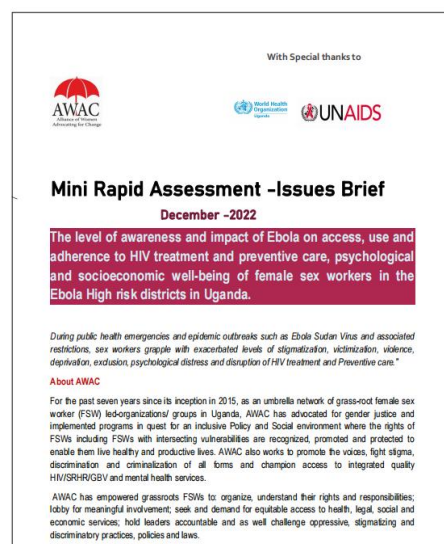
Throughout the year we worked to optimize on sharing our work through the publications below.



threatening aspect that affects adversely the poorest and most minoritized communities!

Check on this link <https://www.pmldaily.com/news/2023/03/womens-day-allow-women-to-choose-when-to-have-children-and-with-whom-awac-wants-restrictive-abortion-laws-revised.html>

## Issue brief on the October 2022--January



**2023, Ebola Outbreak in Uganda.** We examined the level of awareness and impact of Ebola outbreak on access, use and adherence to HIV treatment and preventive care, psychological and socioeconomic well-being of female sex workers in the high-risk districts in Uganda.

Check the full Issues brief on the link below [https://awacuganda.org/download/mini-rapid-assessment-issues-brief-on-the-level-of-awareness-and-impact-of-ebola-outbreak-on-access-use-and-adherence-to-hiv-treatment-and-preventive-care-psychological-and-socioeconomic-well-being/...](https://awacuganda.org/download/mini-rapid-assessment-issues-brief-on-the-level-of-awareness-and-impact-of-ebola-outbreak-on-access-use-and-adherence-to-hiv-treatment-and-preventive-care-psychological-and-socioeconomic-well-being/)

**The Annual Report for the year 2022** which provides valuable insights into lessons learnt, important milestones we have reached, and the exceptional efforts made by our team and grassroots members. Link <https://awacuganda.org/.../09/AWAC-Annual-Report-2022.pdf>

**Some of the Media and Online appearances as a mechanism to amplify our work and community awareness raising.** We were fortunate to have our CHELG innovative model featured in the July-August 2023 edition of the UN Uganda

Bulletin, Where the United Nations recognized our model as one that has been utilized to empower community health, socio-economic development, and resilience safe spaces in response to the Ebola epidemic. For more information, please refer to the link provided below; <https://uganda.un.org/.../UN%20Uganda%20Bulletin%20July...>



**Born and raised in a refugee camp, this 26-year-old is championing SRHR interventions in her community**



She acts on behalf of the Alliance of Women Advocating for Change (AWAC), a grassroots

**Among some refugee populations, a girl's first period means she's ready to marry**



"When I saw blood and told my mother, she shrieked with excitement, attracting the attention of my father and the rest of the community. My father then slaughtered a goat for the clan to celebrate, and they hung a flag on a pole in front of our house." This flag is often white with a bull painted over it to represent livestock as bride price. It signals to

**AWAC's Drop-in Centre providing essential services – HIV, SRHR, and Legal to tens of thousands of sex workers**

BY NELSON MANDELA | PML DAILY REPORTER

December 12, 2023

12 SHARES



KAMPALA – In a bid to empower marginalized women in Uganda, the Alliance of Women Advocating for Change (AWAC), a Civil Society organisation that works with female sex workers is providing several essential services to the com-

**Links to the publications above:**

- <https://www.make-way.org/born-and-raised-in-a-refugee-camp-this-26-year-old-is-championing-srhr-interventions-in-her-community/>
- <https://www.make-way.org/in-some-cultures-among-the-refugee-population-a-girls-first-period-signifies-that-shes-ready-to-marry/>
- <https://www.pmldaily.com/news/2023/12/awacs-drop-in-centre-providing-essential-services-hiv-srhr-and-legal-to-tens-of-thousands-of-sex-workers.html>

**COMMUNITIES TAKE LEAD IN HIV, OTHER PANDEMICS FIGHT**

By Jason Blahopovic



S Milla Kambusi



Madeen Kinyera



Hamington Swayaya

A third world comes together to mark World AIDS Day, a group of civil society organisations led by the United Nations. The day is commemorated globally to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. The day is commemorated globally to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases. The day is commemorated globally to raise awareness about HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

The secretary general of Uganda's National Health Authority (NHA), Hamington Swayaya, has urged the community to take the lead in fighting HIV/AIDS and other pandemics. He says that while governments have a role to play, it is the communities that are on the front lines of the fight.

**Among some refugee populations, a girl's first period means she's ready to marry**

## AWAC's Performance Against the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals' Agenda



### Alliance of Women Advocating for Change highlight the effort towards achieving SDGs

The 78th session of UN General Assembly was held towards the end of 2023 and even remotely AWAC shined, Our Team Leader, Ms. Macklean Kyomya shared with the United Nations in a brief podcast on how AWAC-Uganda is accelerating achievement of Sustainable Development Goals Agenda through community innovations.

<https://youtu.be/bit74wWSLg4?si=YmdhDQK8Eglxshgm>

When we are assessing our performance against the UN SDGs, we assess our contribution to the broader principle of each goal and also attempt to measure performance via the globally accepted indicator framework for the SDGs, developed by an inter-agency expert group on the SDGs.



### **SDG 1: End poverty in all its forms everywhere.**

AWAC's efforts through CHLEGs and advocacy towards supporting grassroots FSWs for their economic inclusion as vulnerable and underserved communities directly contribute to the achievement of the SDG agenda and NDP III by ensuring marginalized women, with focus on (economic justice) for the Female sex workers (FSWs), have equal rights to social economic resilience services, including the ongoing programmes like Parish Development Model. The CHLEGs are now spread across the country with the four newest being in Madi Okollo, Kassanda and Mubende district. During the year, the CHLEGs model onboarded for a new style of formalization where it was fully registered with Uganda Registration Services Bureau (URSB) as a SACCO. First of its kind for sex workers in Uganda.



### **SDG 3: Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages.**

The AWAC continued to extend its partnership with health facilities with the main focus on HIV response and SRH, which directly contribute to SDG 3. During the year, we onboarded more than five new health facilities to partner with, specifically in Jinja and Bugiri.



### **SDG 5: Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls;**

We are committed to improving gender equality by addressing gender injustices faced by female sex workers. We have further capacitated the FSW Human Rights Defenders to engage duty bearers, participate in accountability forums, document, track and report rights violations. In addition, we have continued to identify the empowerment opportunities for FSWs, within the movement, and in wider society. This is also a demonstration by the strong female representation we have at Board, Senior Management and Staff level which is 86%. These efforts contribute to SDG 5 by improving female representation and leadership at all levels within AWAC but also within the community structures.



### **SDG 6: Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all;**

We have continued to engage the Marginalized women and youths on the responsible use of natural resources. This has been more preeminent in the humanitarian settlements of Terego and Madi Okollo district.



### **SDG 7: Ensure access to affordable, reliable, sustainable and modern energy for all.**

We have continued to make awareness on the dangers of deforestation emanating from human activity intended to support production of wood, charcoal, and wood pellets by communities. AWAC remain dedicated to minimizing the environmental impact of her operations by implementing the use of solar energy at our Secretariat and the regional offices as a tandem to strengthen our reliance on renewable energy sources. These initiatives will be aligned with the objectives of SDG 7.



**SDG 8. Promote sustained, inclusive and sustainable economic growth, full and productive employment and decent work for all;**

In alignment with SDG 8, we AWAC continued to equip her grassroots members with sustainable alternative livelihood skills such as tailoring, hair dressing, soap production among others. The institution also provided a safe and secure working environment for our staff by conducting wellness sessions. AWAC continued to embed a number of social economic resilience building initiatives during the implementation of the Ebola response projects. Such initiatives included community based mental health and psychosocial support, use of the CHLEGs and sensitization of the communities of sex workers to avert the adverse post Ebola epidemic impact on their lives.



**SDG 10. Reduce inequality within and among countries;**

AWAC continued to support her grassroots members to establish 4 new CHLEGs. The established CHLEGs are based on the location and incomes of those that subscribe to them. This is intended to enable members from diverse categories strengthen their CHLEG groups based on their capabilities, interests and priorities. This is directly fostering economic inclusion within our grassroots communities FSWs, which is in line with SDG 10. In terms of AWAC employees, the organization champions internal policies, initiatives, and procedures that guarantee both equal opportunities and outcomes.



**SDG 12. Ensure sustainable consumption and production patterns.**

AWAC has committed to expanding digitalization through equipping some of her members such as the DiCRAs and Community monitors from Community Actors for HIV PLUS with Ipads to reduce on the paper usage in filed while collecting data. This commitment contributes to minimizing our environmental impact of our operations and, guarantees that AWAC will continue to integrate responsible consumption and production principles into her activities, aligning with the goals of SDG 12.



**SDG 13. Take urgent action to combat climate change and its impacts.**

AWAC together with Centre for Community Holistic Engagement and Transformation Action (COTA) integrated in a focus on climate change and interrogated its implications on SRHR and worsening the violence in Rhino refugee settlement camp Terego, and Madi Okollo district. The intention of 2023's 16 Days of Activism campaign through the environmental protection trajectory was to establish the nexus and vintages of poor environmental use practices within the discourse of GBV and reproductive health justice. We acknowledge that marginalized girls and women in humanitarian settings have multiple identities in addition to their gender, and systemic discrimination. Understanding how these compounding crises and intersecting identities shape their vulnerability and resilience to climate change, GBV, and SRHR is necessary to make sure climate actions do not aggravate inequalities. This is part of our commitment to furthering the objectives of SDG 13.



### **SDG 16. Promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective,**

**accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels.**

We maintain the utmost standards of transparency, accountability, and integrity throughout all our Work. We have also continued to engage the different stakeholders through our quarterly reflection and joint monitoring sessions. In addition, we have conducted social cohesion dialogues in communities to enhance peace, and coexistence between the FSWs and the local leaders/authorities. This is in line with both Ugandan laws, best practices, and the principles outlined in Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16).



### **SDG 17. Strengthen the means of implementation and revitalize the Global Partnership for Sustainable Development.**

AWAC has utilized and encouraged collaborations within her ecosystem to facilitate the generation of shared human rights based values. This has also encompassed exploring new partnerships, alliances and coalitions within and outside the grassroots sex work movement. We believe that partnerships serve as a pivotal pillar for implementing Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and are indispensable for translating the agenda into tangible results, thereby achieving the aims outlined in SDG 17.

## **Challenges**

- Forced evictions served to us due to ultra anti-rights movements and the passing of the non-progressive laws such as the Anti-Homosexuality Act, 2023 in Uganda. These evictions didn't only affect AWAC Drop-in Centre in Kampala but also our grassroots members such as the Soroti Women's Health Support Initiative.
- We also experienced staff members going through physical and mental related illnesses that had adverse impact on them. These include terrible motorcycle accident and chronic illnesses that meant exorbitant out of pocket expenditures as well as psychological torture.
- The unprecedented shrinkage of the civic space due to growing anti rights movements strained our work making it doubly difficult. Moreso, there was also an upsurge in attacks against staff --with three of them experiencing emotion and physical assaults which left not only physical but mental scars
- There was also an upsurge of venue raids where female sex workers conduct their work (such as in Natete --a Kampala city Suburb) and gather which presented challenges not only in impeding their source livelihood but also exacerbated their exposure to arbitrary arrests and imprisonment
- The public health emergency of the Ebola epidemic at the beginning of the year (before it was declared being no longer a public health emergency) really shook the mental and economic resilience of our grassroots members in Mubende and Kassanda.

## Lessons learnt and Recommendations

As our staff team expanded, two of the employees left and took on new career paths and challenges, whereas two others had to take extended long sick leaves—one due to a grave motorcycle accident and the other is battling a chronic illness. These tragic experiences have imparted the necessity of implementing an insurance plan in the next fiscal year. The high costs of medical bills for both employees and the organization emphasized the importance of financial protection against unexpected health-related expenses.

2023 impressed on us the fundamental lesson of investing in safety and security, following gruesome attacks on three of our staff. This implies that the rapid closing civic space pertaining SRHR in Uganda that has become quite volatile calls for opposition monitoring, and continuous Value Clarification and Attitude Transformation

The year 2023 registered the need to build institutional resilience and sustainability. The current funding landscape has been shifting with more being directed to the pressing emergencies around the world such as in the Middle East, to support the Gaza war crisis. We need to look more towards resource mobilisation and reducing donor dependency through economic resilience initiatives such as CHLEGs.

The wave of the anti-rights sentiments in Uganda 2023 doubled the workload on our staff in a bid to continue realising the impact notwithstanding. Nevertheless, this was not without challenges in terms of staff wellness and the need to build their mental health resilience. The year taught us that mental psychosocial support wellness and capacity enhancement need to be continuous and upscaled so that the organisation thrives.

The year also taught us that we have to begin rigorously engaging in global and regional spaces to amplify our advocacy voices and push our agenda. That's why the institution has started on the application processes for the African Commission on Human and People's Rights ACHPR and Consultative status for Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) of United Nations.

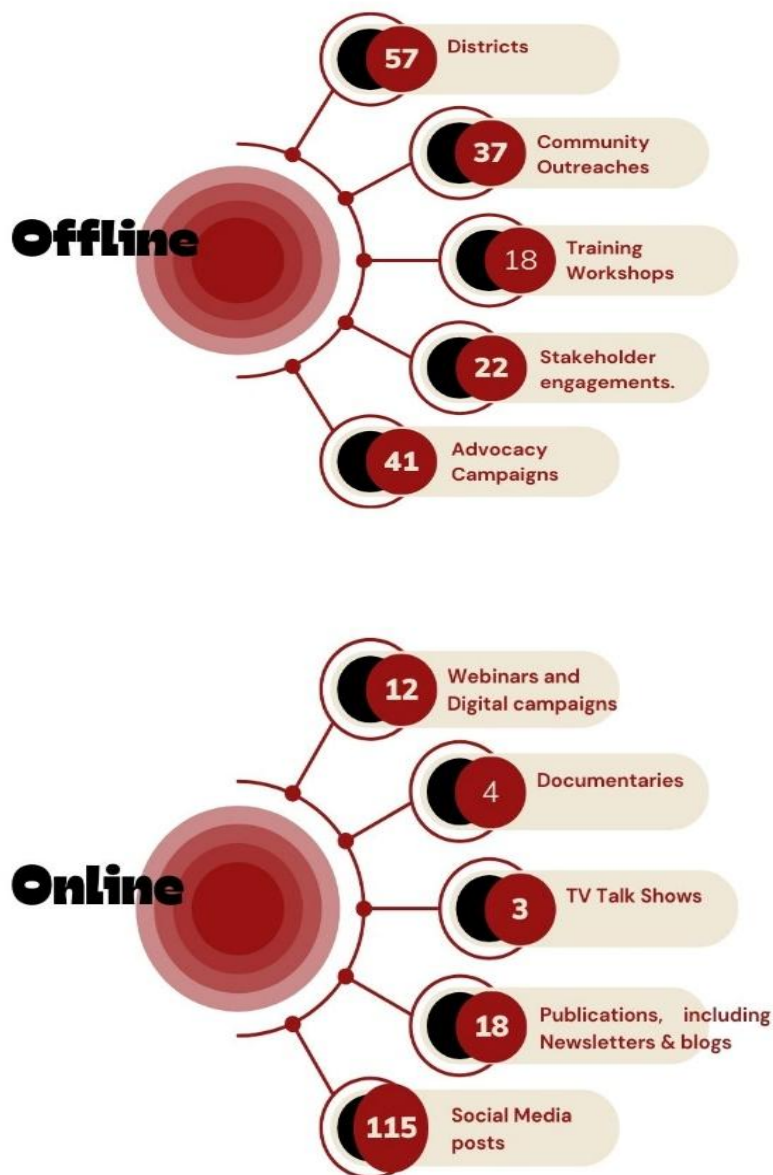
Providing targeted, integrated, inclusive, friendly, timely and comprehensive HIV and Sexual Reproductive Health Rights services that include; health, social and economic aspects to the Female sex workers through the Drop-in Centres, not only increases access to health services, but also improve their health perception.

Continue social cohesion engagements in the communities. These are essential in closing the rifts between the duty bearers/local authorities and rights holders.



# 2023 in Numbers

## 365 DAYS IN REVIEW



## Some of the moments in the year during our engagement



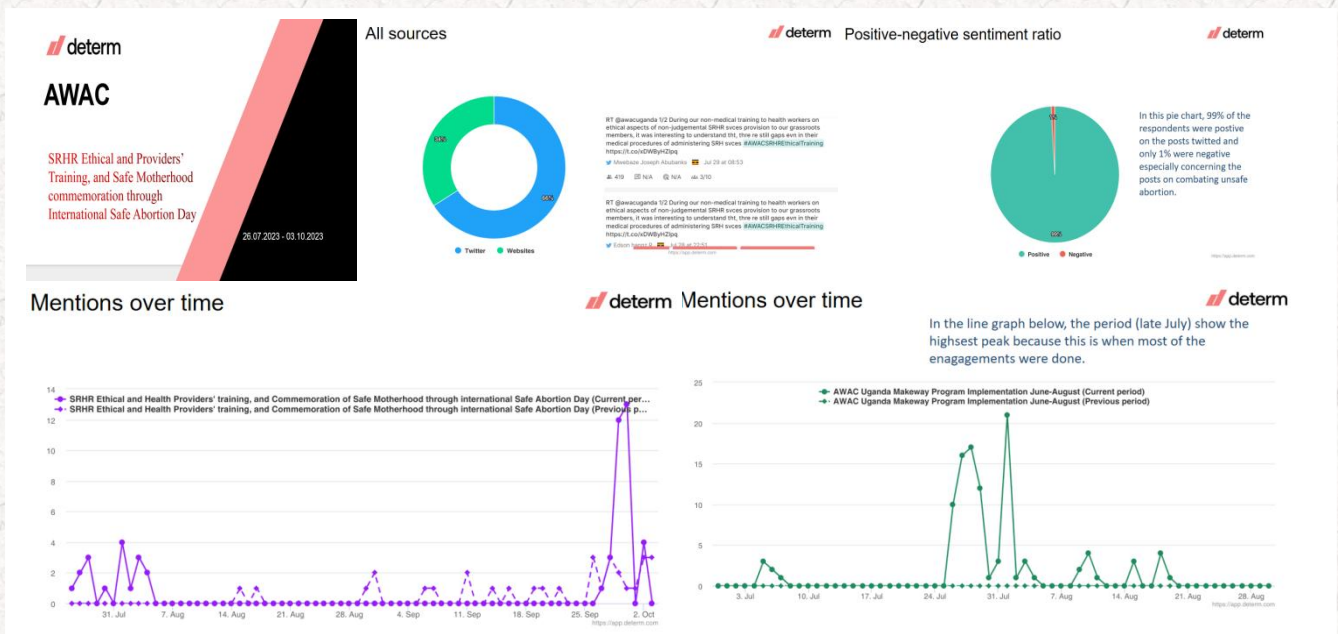
# ONLINE UTILIZATION AND OUR COVERAGE IN 2023

The organization started using the online determ application which is used to assess the performance of the online campaigns and messages. Determ allows us to know the positive and negative sentiments on various highly contested SRHR issues as well as the location of our coverage. Further to note that, this has been a tandem to Identify the need to integrate-in more online campaigns into our programmes to expand our viewership as well as gaining more public support for reproductive justice issues as a starting point for engaging stakeholders.

## WITNESSED EXPANSION ONLINE

Towards the end of 2022, AWAC's X-platform formally Twitter was hacked and locked. Later in May 2023, the account was unblocked. Despite this challenge. We continued to experience growth through the year with over **1500 new followers** on our social media platforms

Below is the sample of the evaluations that have been done using Determ.

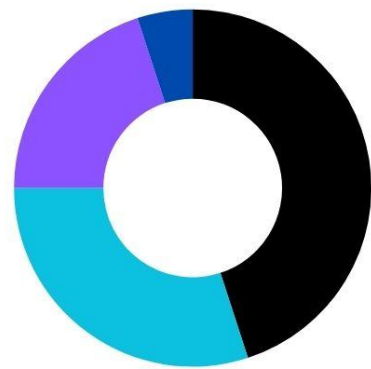


# SOCIAL MEDIA

## 2023 GROWTH

### SUMMARY

#### TOP SOCIAL MEDIA PLATFORMS



#### AUDIENCE GROWTH

New Followers



118



378



1231



68

# FINANCIALS

**ALLIANCE FOR WOMEN ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE (AWAC)  
AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2023**

**STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL POSITION  
AS AT 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER, 2023**

	NOTES	2023 UGX	2022 UGX
<b>ASSETS</b>			
<b>NON CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Property Plant and Equipment	2.0	762,827,651	91,678,837
<b>Total</b>		<b>762,827,651</b>	<b>91,678,837</b>
<b>CURRENT ASSETS</b>			
Cash at Bank	3.0	236,507,104	282,253,053
Accounts Receivables	4.0	128,822,391	29,724,803
<b>Total</b>		<b>365,329,495</b>	<b>311,977,856</b>
<b>TOTAL CURRENT ASSETS</b>		<b>1,128,157,146</b>	<b>403,656,693</b>
<b>FUNDS AND LIABILITIES</b>			
<b>FUNDS</b>			
Capital Fund	5.0	302,827,651	91,678,837
Restricted Funds	6.0	348,925,409	302,307,107
General fund	7.0	(5,275,042)	(5,514,024)
<b>Total</b>		<b>646,478,018</b>	<b>388,471,920</b>
<b>NON-CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Borrowings	8.0	443,819,048	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>443,819,048</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>CURRENT LIABILITIES</b>			
Deferred Income	9.0	-	9,184,773
Accounts payables	10.0	37,860,080	6,000,000
<b>Total</b>		<b>37,860,080</b>	<b>15,184,773</b>
<b>TOTAL FUNDS AND LIABILITIES</b>		<b>1,128,157,146</b>	<b>403,656,693</b>

The financial statements set out on pages 10 to 34 were approved by the board of directors on.....2024 and signed on its behalf by:

  
Chairperson

  
Executive Director

The statement of financial position is to be read in conjunction with the notes to and forming part of the financial statements set out on pages 13-20.

KAFS and Associates  
(Certified Public Accountant)

10  
Audited Financial Statements for the  
year ended 31st December, 2023


AWAC

**ALLIANCE FOR WOMEN ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE (AWAC)  
AUDITED FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31<sup>ST</sup> DECEMBER 2023**

<b>CONSOLIDATED STATEMENT OF COMPREHENSIVE INCOME</b>	<b>Notes</b>	<b>2023</b>	<b>2022</b>
<b>INCOME</b>		<b>UGX</b>	<b>UGX</b>
Grants and Donations	11.(a)	1,801,942,185	1,137,819,764
General Fund	11.(b)	190,698,024	-
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,992,640,209</b>	<b>1,137,819,764</b>
<b>EXPENDITURE</b>			
Capital Expenditure	12) a)	234,563,814	-
Project Expenses	12 (b)	1,505,316,093	831,216,041
General Fund Expenses	12. (c)	2,459,042	10,375,144
<b>Total</b>		<b>1,742,338,949</b>	<b>841,591,185</b>
<b>Less Transfers to Restricted Fund Account</b>			
<b>Surplus for the year</b>		<b>250,301,260</b>	<b>296,228,579</b>
<b>Fund Balance Movement</b>			
Balance as at 1 January		296,793,083	564,504
Adjustment		(219,624,928)	-
Surplus for the year		250,301,260	296,228,579
<b>Fund balance as at 31st December</b>		<b>327,469,415</b>	<b>296,793,083</b>
<b>Represented by:</b>			
Cash and Bank		236,507,104	282,253,053
Receivables		128,822,391	29,724,803
Deferred Grant b/f		-	(9,184,773)
Payables		(37,860,080)	(6,000,000)
		<b>327,469,415</b>	<b>296,793,083</b>

**Note:**

**Adjustments** Relates to correction of wrongly carried forward opening fund balances of project accounts.  
The above surplus reported includes restricted funds of shs250,062,278 for project fund balances.

 Uganda Revenue Authority <small>DEVELOPING UGANDA TOGETHER</small>	<b>TRANSACTION TAX CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE</b> (Issued under Sec. 134 Income Tax Act, CAP 340)  Issue Date: 22/04/2024	For General Tax Questions call our Toll Free <b>0800117000</b>  Or log onto URA web portal <a href="https://ura.go.ug">https://ura.go.ug</a> Notice - DT- 2091

**Certificate Reference Number**

**MA02240979929**

**Certificate Barcode**



URA hereby certifies that the applicant whose particulars appear below has complied with the required tax obligations for the tax period from: 01/07/2022 to: 30/06/2023

**Section A: Applicant's Particulars**

Tax Payer BRN	220998
Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN)	1012436216
Taxpayer's Legal Name	ALLIANCE OF WOMEN ADVOCATING FOR CHANGE (AWAC)
Taxpayer Business Name	
Physical Address	10, NABULAGALA ROAD OFF BALINTUMA ROAD, BALINTUMA, KAMPALA, RUBAGA DIVISION NORTH, RUBAGA DIVISION

**Section B: Addressee's Particulars**

Taxpayer Identification Number (TIN)	1000046996		
Addressee's Legal Name*	THE AIDS SUPPORT ORGANISATION (TASO)		
Addressee's Business	THE AIDS SUPPORT ORGANISATION (TASO) LTD		
Transaction Reference Number			
Phone Contact	256 - 752774164	Email	mail@tasouganda.org

**Section C: Purpose of TCC**

<b>This TCC has been issued to the applicant for the purpose below:</b>
1) OTHER : donor requirement

**Section D: Official URA**

Name of Issuing Officer	ALLAN MUNYIGA MUHIRWA		
Designation of Issuing Officer	supervisor	Contact Number	0772641192
This Certificate has been issued for and on behalf of the Commissioner / Commissioner General			

## AWAC BOARD MEMBERS --OUTGOING



**PATRICIA KIMERA**  
Board chairperson



**SANYU PENLOPE**  
Secretary to the Board



**PETER MUDIOPE**  
Board Vice Chairperson



**KENNETH MWEHONGE**  
Board Member



**ASERAÏT AGNES**  
Board Member



**FLAVIA KYOMUKAMA**  
Treasurer on the Board



**NYAMWIJA IMMACULATE**  
Community Representative on the Board



## AWAC BOARD MEMBERS –INCOMING



**OWOMUGISHA BAZARE IMMACULATE**  
–Board Chairperson



**PETER MUDIOPE** –Vice Chairperson



**ADIPA JAMIMA** –Board Member



**TEDDY AYO** –Representative Acholi sub-region



**TAUSI LOGOSE** –Treasurer Board



**SHARON NAMULINDWA**–Board Member



**SHILA NATENDA** –Representative Central Region

# 2023 STAFF MEMBERS



**MACKLEAN KYOMYA**  
Team Leader



**RESTY K. MAGEZI**  
Director of Programs



**SHALOM MUTEBE**  
Finance and Admin Manager



**ROBERT MUKWAYA**  
Knowledge Management  
Coordinator



**MICHAEL SSEMAKULA**  
MEL Manager



**TUSHABE JANEFER**  
Community Engagement  
Manager



**BOSCO MUKUBBA**  
Manager -Masaka  
Region



**LUCIA RUVARASHE  
NDANGA**  
Volunteer -Knowledge  
Management



**MELB SIMIYU**  
HIV Prevention Officer -  
AIUHC



**HADIJA  
NAKIMERA**  
Finance  
Officer

# 2023 STAFF MEMBERS



**FARIDAH NAMUKOSE**  
Intersectionality & Economic  
Empowerment Officer



**CHARLES OKOTH**  
Clinical Officer -Kampala Region



**RACHEAL BIRBAWA**  
Data Officer



**CHRISTINE NAJJUMA**  
Sign Language Interpreter



**EDITAH KAMAGARA**  
Advocacy & SRHR Officer



**ESTHER CHANDIRU**  
SRHR Officer



**BONGOLE FRED**  
Field Officer -Masaka



**AHIMBISIBWE ALOYSIUS**  
Field Officer



**NAMISANGO RITA**  
Clinical Officer -Kyotera



**DOREEN MUTONI**  
DiC Coordinator -Kampala



**NAKATO AIDAH**  
Office Assistant



**FORTUNATE AINEMBABAZI**  
DiC Expert Client -Masaka



**MILLY NANSIKOMBI**  
DiC Expert Client -Kyotera



**JOSEPH OKELLO**  
Security Officer -Kampala

## Our grassroots Members



# Our Partners



Located Off Balintuma Road | On Nabulagala Road  
Plot 10; 1st Black Gate on your left  
Mengo-Rubaga Division | Kampala City.

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P O BOX 31762, Kampala | Uganda  
Tel Contacts: +256 392 881 454 | Mob-+256 774 603  
754 | Malaika Toll-Free 0800333177  
Emails: [info@awacuganda.org](mailto:info@awacuganda.org)

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Toll-Free 0800333177  
Twitter: @awacuganda  
Instagram: @awacug  
LinkedIn: Alliance of Women Advocating for Change  
Facebook: Alliance of Women Advocating for Change

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Website: [www.awacuganda.org](http://www.awacuganda.org).

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