



Press Release

Embargoed until 27 August, 18h00

Launch of the Asijiki Coalition for the Decriminalisation of Sex Work

On 26-27 August 2015, individuals representing more than 17 organisations gathered to build consensus on a campaign to advocate for the decriminalisation of sex work. This evening, the Asijiki Coalition for the Decriminalisation of Sex Work in South Africa was formally launched in Cape Town and brought together activists, human rights defenders, lawyers, sex workers and academics. Asijiki is the isiZulu word for “No turning/looking back”. The Coalition is made up of participants from a cross-section of society and who work towards safeguarding the human rights of sex workers everywhere.

The Coalition Steering Committee comprises of Sisonke Sex Worker Movement, Women’s Legal Centre, the Sex Worker Education & Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT) and Sonke Gender Justice. Kholi Buthelezi from Sisonke who facilitated the launch event said, “We now have a solid platform to raise issues on how to go about strengthening our call for decriminalisation collectively without fear of stigmatisation and prejudice. The Coalition will be able to challenge the negative stereotyping of sex workers and also build the capacity to challenge issues relating to our human, legal and health Rights”.

The Coalition will conduct advocacy to highlight the impact of criminalisation on sex worker health, human rights and limited access to services and will specifically lobby for law reform in the form of the decriminalisation of sex work. Cherith Sanger, SWEAT’s Human Rights Defence and Advocacy Manager, noted that “The Coalition aims to strengthen a collective national response to promote, protect and defend the human rights of sex workers to fight to long-term and high levels of human

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rights violations experienced by sex workers that persist under the criminalisation of sex work.”

Stacey-Leigh Manoek, an attorney from the Women’s Legal Centre said the Coalition will support strategic impact litigation and legal advocacy instituted by the membership of the Coalition.

The South African Law Reform Commission has been investigating legal models for sex work since 2000, and has released no concrete recommendations in the 15 years that they have been busy with this process. Says Marlise Richter of Sonke Gender Justice “Every day that South Africa continues to criminalise sex work, is another day that sex workers experience abuse, discrimination and hardship. The South African Law Reform Commission and the Department of Justice & Correctional Services will be key advocacy targets of the Coalition and their unconscionable delay in moving law reform forward”.

Media Contacts:

- Cherith Sanger – Worker Education & Advocacy Taskforce – cheriths@sweat.org.za or 071 608 3357
- Stacey-Leigh Manoek – Women’s Legal Centre – stacey-leigh@wlce.co.za or 082 075 5571
- Marlise Richter - Sonke Gender Justice – marlise@genderjustice.org.za or 082 858 9927
- Ruvimbo Tenga – Sisonke Sex Worker Movement – ruvimbo.tenga@gmail.com - 072 885 6141 or Gavin Jacobs (021) 448-7875 (ext 217)