



Preventing Domestic Violence

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THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW - DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND SEX WORKERS

- Discrimination within discrimination – less than 1% of the global budget for preventing HIV infection is allocated to preventing it within the sex worker population.
- Some sex workers are forced into the trade when there are no other job options. These feel judged and discriminated against when they make the choice to take these jobs to feed their children. They would rather the system look at ways to alleviate their poverty, rather than discriminating against them for earning income in the only way they feel is available.
- Many sex workers (male and female) were sexually abused as children, and now continue to be abused by clients and police.
- Police abuse / brutality by extortion for sex or money, includes police confiscation of condoms and vital medications like ARV drugs.
- Abuse by police goes unchallenged, as sex work is illegal.
- Sex workers are afraid to come forward and bring police corruption to light, for fear of being prosecuted.
- Unregulated commercial sex facilities are to blame for a significant portion of the spread of HIV.
- A significantly higher rate of HIV exists among sex workers and their clients than in other populations (Jamaica – UNAIDS).
- Gender inequality, homophobia, transphobia, whorephobia and the criminalization of vulnerable populations (such as sex workers) are considered drivers of the HIV epidemic.
- Where health care is provided for sexworkers, they often face humiliation and indignities such as being obliged to wait in designated lines to receive care, and being ridiculed by doctors and nurses.
- Sex workers generally have no safe community spaces where they are welcome to discuss their own issues and learn from each other, as well as receive education on a range of issues such as: self-esteem building, psychosocial care, community solidarity, health issues, self-organizing, effective and realistic HIV prevention, and general dissemination of rights-based health information.
- No easy access to addiction counselling, sex abuse counselling, rehabilitation, school fees for sex workers children and access to employment for those who wish to transition out of sex work.
- No programmes and strategies designed to provide continuity of care and consistent prevention outreach to mobile sex workers, including data bases or management information systems to make their health records available to providers and NGOs across the region in a confidential manner.
- Many programs designed to “rescue” sex workers are themselves very stigmatizing and drive SWs further underground.

- It is proven that sex workers themselves have the best/most effective ideas for preventing HIV infection, but their voices are not considered for technical expertise.
- Sex workers represent multi-varied sub-populations, each with their own specific needs and priorities.
- The incidence of sexual violence against sex workers is extremely high, coming from clients, pimps and police, which renders them at extreme risk of HIV infection.
- ‘Studies out of Trinidad and Tobago and Jamaica that were originally designed to explore cross generational transactional sex revealed that in the minds of young women, sex and money are inextricably linked. In fact, sex without financial gain or security is seen in some cases by this population to be non-normative. This trend has enormous implications for HIV risk since the studies document that many young women are involved in a complex web of concurrent sexual relationships and demonstrate little concern about HIV risk and inconsistent condom use. The scale of this problem, the blurred boundary between transactional sex and sex work, and the fact that very little is known about HIV rates among people engaged in transactional sex collectively, present a major challenge for estimating HIV prevalence among sex workers and developing effective interventions.’ (CVC)
- Mobility is very high in this population, both intra and inter-island. Their undocumented status makes it extremely difficult to access communities of care, and regular documented health care. This includes access to education and legal services. Along with other discriminations faced by SWs, mobility leaves them vulnerable to national or ethnic/cultural discrimination when not in their own island.
- Collecting data on sex workers is complicated by the fact that most focus is normally upon street walkers. No data has been collected on the persons doing sex work who are also in other professions, such as researchers, doctors, activists, and so on.
- Sex workers outside of the street-walker or establishment-based populations almost never self-identify.
- Sex workers within the prison population never self-identify, and are seldom named.
- Sex workers who primarily service the tourist industry, have their identities protected by the tourist industry.
- Sex workers who work in brothels, particularly in foreign islands, normally have their passports held and are forbidden to leave for indefinite periods of time, thereby comprising a sex-slave population.
- Other communities of sex workers include those who work independently within their own homes, strip dancers, bar patrons, as highly-paid escorts, university students, dominatrices in legal sex-retail outlets, phone or internet operators, etc.
- Sex workers live under the daily threat of arrest, deportation, violence, and STI infection. They also live under the isolation and invisibility associated with their work.
- Sex workers are pivotal to the underground economy, including the working poor and recent immigrants.
- “Normal” competitiveness amongst peers, in regards to “better” or regular clientele, nicer establishments and better fees.

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