



SOLIDARITY

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<http://www.champnetwork.org/index.php?name=solid>

Sex Workers Organizing

Workers in the sex industry fight discrimination, violence, and HIV

Many different types of jobs and trade can be defined as sex work. And many people around the world may call themselves sex workers, including people who work as escorts, prostitutes, erotic massage workers, exotic dancers, or hustlers; do phone sex, lingerie modeling, adult internet sites, or adult films; live with the support of a sugar-daddy or sugar-mama; or have sex for housing, food, clothing, drugs, or other things they need. In this issue of the *Solidarity Project*, we discuss ways that sex workers are building their power to protect themselves from violence, arrest, stigma, and HIV.

"Sex workers organizing as HIV prevention workers, especially in Australia, New Zealand, Europe, Canada, South Africa, and some Asian countries have, with funding for HIV prevention programs, fostered a thriving sex workers' rights movement," says Priscilla Alexander, longtime activist and researcher on sex work and HIV. "The best HIV prevention is designed by vulnerable communities themselves, so it's essential that sex workers have a say. But the gag rule has damaged global organizing." The *gag rule* is a policy requiring all organizations outside the United States to denounce prostitution in order to receive global HIV prevention money (see sidebar next page). In this issue of the *Solidarity Project*, we spotlight activist groups, such as Davida in Brazil and EMPOWER in Thailand, that work creatively without U.S. funding.

We also explore how arrest, deportation and police abuse, as well as the stigma and violence sex workers often experience from clients, in their workplace and in society, put them at risk for HIV – and how organized resistance to these threats is an essential element of HIV prevention.

"The first reason for not using condoms is the fear of violence," says Yaya Liem of **Project SAFE**, a street outreach program for sex workers run by volunteers in Philadelphia. "The rate and visibility of violence is sky-high."



Research conducted by San Francisco's **St. James Infirmary**, an occupational safety and health clinic for sex workers run by and for sex workers, has found that sex workers who have a history of arrest are more likely to test positive for HIV and that sex workers who work collectively have lower rates of HIV. Activists around the U.S. and internationally cite examples of HIV prevention workers being arrested in police sweeps while distributing condoms on the street, or police using condoms as evidence or justification for arrest of sex workers. The risk of arrest, deportation or sexual assault by police also increases the risk of violence in other ways, activists say, because it may force workers to hide in unsafe places or get into a car with a client quickly without checking him out first for warning signs that he may become violent. Police work that targets johns can also mean workers are pressured to leave public areas quickly with clients who are afraid of arrest.

Sex work is comprised of a predominantly female workforce, and the threats that some workers face relate to the ways that society treats women. Male sex workers have to contend with homophobic violence and heightened HIV risk. Transwomen risk transphobic violence and arrest on prostitution charges even when they are not doing sex work, simply because police assume they are on the stroll and are not, for example, waiting at the bus stop.

Despite funding barriers and police repression, sex worker activists are developing creative new ways to build power and protect themselves. "Take Action – What You Can Do" offers ways to fight for sex workers' rights, whether you are a sex worker activist yourself or you have some time to offer in solidarity. Sex workers have taken their place among the world's leading HIV prevention experts. It's time for the rest of us to listen and learn.

Ideology Continues to Trump HIV Prevention

The Global Impact of the U.S. Anti-Prostitution Pledge

The gag rule. The loyalty oath. Where did it come from and what does it mean to people at risk for HIV?

In 2003, Congress passed the Global AIDS Act and the Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act (TVPRA), which bar the use of federal funds to "promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution." These laws require any organization applying for or receiving U.S. funding to combat global HIV/AIDS or human trafficking (forced labor) to sign a statement that it "does not promote, support, or advocate the legalization or practice of prostitution" – parroting the lawmakers' words.

Organizations that distribute U.S. funding to sub-grantees must ensure that those groups also comply with the oath. Organizations that have to adopt the policy include foreign non-governmental organizations (NGOs) receiving U.S. HIV/AIDS funds and U.S.-based NGOs working abroad.

These funding restrictions are in line with similar – and ever-increasing – efforts to force organizations working in public health to comply with ideological litmus tests that often actually hurt public health practice – and betray human rights standards.

With this policy, the U.S. government has increased stigma and discrimination against sex workers in their home countries. In Thailand, for example, it has led to the breakdown of successful activist coalitions and joint HIV prevention efforts, as groups that were previously allies will no longer work with sex worker groups. Lost funding worldwide has led to serious condom shortages for sex workers. Veteran activists against forced labor within sex work are tarred as supporting human trafficking. And drop-in centers that provided many homeless sex workers with a place to bathe, nap, and find a sense of home and family have closed due to the loss of funds. Their families have been torn apart. People who were active in community HIV prevention can no longer find each other.

U.S. policies run contrary to best practices in public health and undermine efforts to stem the spread of HIV and forced labor.

Thanks to the Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) and "Taking the Pledge"



Sex workers from around the world demonstrate at the XVI International HIV/AIDS Conference in Toronto, August 16, 2006.

Liberated Style

Sex workers in Washington, DC, and Brazil develop creative strategies to fight stigma, violence, police repression, and HIV

By Darby Hickey

The “DC Madam” is in the news again. Some sex workers on the streets of the nation’s capital may be glad that Deborah Jeane Palfrey (accused of running an illegal escort service for 13 years) has helped reveal the hypocrisy of moral crusader David Vitter, the Republican Senator from Louisiana, who has admitted to being a client of the service. At the end of April this year, Deputy Secretary of State Randall Tobias – the man responsible for implementing the policy that forces all organizations to denounce prostitution in order to receive U.S. global AIDS funds – also **resigned after being linked to the alleged prostitution service**. Although it may be a joy to watch Vitter and Tobias tumble, many DC sex workers want to know why Palfrey is getting so much media attention while most sex workers regularly face violence and police arrest.

You won’t hear about sex workers organizing for their rights in DC in the media frenzy surrounding Palfrey’s case – but they are organizing. Transgender women, African-American exotic dancers, online escorts, male street-based workers and sex workers from many different fields are coming together to push for change in the District and to support broader activism by people trading sex for money and other things they need for survival.



Washington, DC: Safety in the Streets

In 2005, community members and organizations such as [Different Avenues](#), [HIPS \(Helping Individual Prostitutes Survive\)](#), [La Clinica del Pueblo](#), and HIV/AIDS groups, organized to form the Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC to work against proposed repressive legislation targeting people in public spaces. Although the legislation passed, the organizing effort built community among those involved. People were determined to keep up the fight for the rights of some of the most marginalized communities in our city. One of the most alarming aspects of the law was to create “prostitution free zones” where police could arrest anyone in the jurisdiction they believed were there for the “purpose of prostitution” – even if they weren’t breaking any law. Basically, the legislation gave legal backing to long-standing practices of police profiling of certain individuals and communities. For example, these techniques pushed transgender sex workers out of a downtown stroll into a much more dangerous area located on the literal edge of the city where they are not only robbed, raped, shot at and more, but also have greater difficulty interacting with health outreach teams.

To help support our claims about the negative impact of the legislation, the Alliance for a Safe & Diverse DC started the Community Research Project. The Project is examining ways that DC’s prostitution policies affect communities, including trans people, the homeless, and women of color. Community based research in this case means research directed and conducted by members of the affected communities, rather than by academics. Our diverse research team will use anthropological and sociological techniques in gathering surveys, observing police activity, and conducting interviews to get as much information as possible. Very little research has been done on the impact of prostitution policies and issues in the United States, and little of that sparse research has been led by people who engage in commercial sex.

We wanted to do this research to show lawmakers that they should make decisions based on evidence-based research and careful thought rather than knee-jerk reactions. By continuing to pass new anti-prostitution laws without having more information, they are not making good policies and are even contradicting their own efforts – like HIV prevention. The District has among the highest HIV rates in the country, but increased criminalization and harassment by police of suspected sex workers drive the workers further underground, further from services like health outreach and HIV counseling and testing. Police harassment also decreases sex workers’ ability to negotiate condom use or even to carry prevention materials, since police sometimes seize the materials or use them as an excuse to arrest someone on prostitution-related charges.

Building the movement to push back against repression, members of the Alliance and other individuals and groups are working with national sex worker networks to organize the first [Sex Worker Leadership Training Institute](#) this fall in Washington, DC. The Institute will bring together a small group of activists from communities of sex workers to receive training in skills to make social change – like organizing a rally, working with the media, and planning an advocacy campaign. Since people with experience trading sex for things they need rarely have been supported as activists (because we’re viewed as criminals or victims), we see this as an important step toward strengthening our local movements as well as the national effort.



Brazil: Activists on the Runway

Movements for sex workers rights are much stronger in other parts of the world. In Brazil, for example, groups have been organizing since the 1970s, not only on health issues – and later, HIV – but also to fight against stigma and state violence and for labor rights. “Any group, when it is organized, can better demand their rights,” said a representative (who preferred not to be named) of the group **David**a, an organization of sex workers in Rio de Janeiro. In 2005, when the Bush Administration implemented its policy requiring that U.S. global AIDS funds could only go to groups that denounce prostitution and sex worker empowerment, Davida and other sex worker groups in Brazil were instrumental in persuading the Brazilian government to reject \$40 million in U.S. aid rather than sign the pledge – the only country so far to do so.

Davida’s representative said the group recognized that there was a problem with being dependent on outside funding sources even before this policy, so Davida started its own fashion line – Daspu. “Daspu is really helping the movement, in the sense that people are better informed about us and our demands, even wearing clothes that symbolize our struggle,” they said. “When people see prostitutes showing their faces with no shame, going on catwalks, showing their clothes, or watch [us] on TV, they can’t ignore us any more.” Davida’s representative added that decreasing stigma and increasing self-esteem, as the Daspu project does, are essential not only to organizing, but also to preventing the spread of HIV. People exchanging sex for things they need will feel more empowered to demand safer sex techniques, access services without facing discrimination, and value their own lives more – leading to greater self care around HIV and other issues.



Daspu, the clothing line benefiting Brazil’s sex worker rights organization, Davida, can be viewed online at <http://daspu.com.br/putique/>. For international orders, email international@daspu.com.br.



Expanding Sex Workers' Rights

By fighting discrimination, violence and criminalization, sex workers are fighting HIV. Communities that trade sex for money and other necessities are often isolated, and an important step for sex worker rights is to make connections across movements. Sex workers are the people best positioned to stop HIV in their own communities – they are positioned to change community norms (including clients' norms) around condom use and needle sharing. They are the experts on what will work best for their communities. They are also best positioned to run their own programs, as they are less likely to sustain the discriminatory behaviors of biased service providers.

Our marginalization makes us vulnerable to repressive policies – like a recently approved law in Tennessee that forces convicted sex workers to undergo mandatory HIV testing – and we need the support of other AIDS activists. As sex worker activists united to say at the 16th International AIDS Conference in Toronto, “You can’t fight HIV without sex workers – and we can’t fight HIV without human and workers’ rights!”

Darby Hickey is Co-director at Different Avenues, where she works on programs, finance, fundraising, and more. Darby is also a writer and reporter who has been broadcast/published by Free Speech Radio News, Pacifica Radio, Spread Magazine, DC North, ColorLines, Left Turn, and others. If not doing any of the above, you're likely to find her DJing, dancing, agitating for trans and economic justice, or gathering with friends for a cookout.

Kumjing's Activist Passport:

Migrant sex workers in Thailand become HIV prevention leaders, despite U.S. groups' attempts to “rescue” them

By Suzy Subways, with additional reporting by Darby Hickey

When the Thai sex worker activist group **EMPOWER** traveled to Toronto for the International AIDS Conference last year, one of its most vocal representatives was a puppet named Kumjing. EMPOWER works with many women who come to Thailand from Burma for health care, a way to support their families back home, and freedom from Burma's military regime. They also come from Burma illegally – which means they cannot attend international meetings as other activists do.

“Think about a poor Burmese travel[ing] from one country to another,” says Noi, an EMPOWER activist. “How would she be treated at the immigration authority? When Kumjing was invited to the Toronto AIDS conference in 2006, we took her like a human being, like an art masterpiece made by migrants... The puppet of human life is telling her story from home, in the journey and in the meeting room – on the panel discussion.”

EMPOWER Foundation was started by sex workers and activist allies in 1985 and produced Thailand's first HIV educational materials. Now EMPOWER runs its own bar, “Can Do,” collectively owned and run by sex workers, with best-practice occupational health and safety standards, a sex worker-designed security system, condom distribution, and workers who are trained as safe sex counselors.



EMPOWER's Kumjing puppets represented migrant sex workers who could not speak on a panel for fear of deportation at the XV International HIV/AIDS Conference in Bangkok, Thailand,

Three thousand sex workers have studied at EMPOWER University, which offers primary and high school qualifications, computer skills, and safer sex counseling skills, as well as training in leadership, media, research and public speaking. English classes are designed by sex workers who want to learn the language in a way that meets their needs – and helps them protect themselves from HIV. For example, a sex worker who can say to a customer, “I like wine but I don’t like whiskey” and “do you have a condom?” will have a better chance to stay in control and away from unsafe situations.

But EMPOWER cannot get HIV prevention funding from the U.S. government, because that would require the foundation to oppose prostitution. Powerful Christian Right groups such as the Family Research Council and Concerned Women for America lobbied successfully to make sure that any U.S. international HIV prevention funding is bound by their own ideology that all prostitution is trafficking – forced labor – not an occupation or trade. So, as sex workers build their own institutions and become leaders in HIV prevention, they are still at risk for raids by police and even non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that seek to “rescue” them from prostitution.

Last year, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation **granted \$5 million** to the International Justice Mission (IJM), a conservative Christian organization, to fight sex trafficking. IJM claims, “Only rescue from their illegal captivity will fully ensure that current victims are protected from HIV/AIDS.” But “rescue” often means arrests and deportation. “Rehabilitation” – such as counseling (often religious-based 12 step programs) and substance abuse programs – may be part of the program, but real empowerment and options are not. And telling women’s families and communities they are sex workers only adds stigma and discrimination to their problems.

“For those of us who come from Burma, deportation is especially frightening,” states a 2005 **document** from EMPOWER’s Chaing Mai branch. “It is bad enough that often as illegal migrants our work is exploited within the industry; if we are also ‘rescued’ things get a whole lot worse.... Many of us have never been forced to live as victims before our experience of the dreaded R&R...rescue and rehabilitation.”

Now, dozens of Kumjing puppets made by migrant women from EMPOWER have traveled around the world, and artists and activists have adopted them, in solidarity with demands for freedom of movement and from the discrimination that allows exploitation of migrant workers. “Kumjing is a very smart migrant girl from a foreign land,” Noi says. “She decided to take a journey for the better life.... Kumjing’s journey is still on – a hard and long struggle.”



Each Kumjing puppet has a passport declaring her right to freedom of movement and freedom from human trafficking and unnecessary rescues.



Excerpt: Durbar Policy Document on Positive Sex Workers

In the Bengali language, Durbar means *unstoppable*. Based in West Bengal, the region of India with the major global city Kolkata (Calcutta), **Durbar Mahila Samanwaya Committee**, or Durbar for short, is an organization of 65,000 sex workers. Durbar grounds its work in the “3 Rs” – **Respect** toward sex workers, **Reliance** on the knowledge of the community of sex workers, and **Recognition** of sex work as an occupation. In 1999, Durbar took over a government HIV prevention program, the Sonagachi Project, which now has HIV prevention programs in 49 sex work sites and outreach efforts serving 20,000 street workers and their clients. The group also provides low-cost HIV medications at its own clinics, education and vocational programs for sex workers and their children, cultural activities, savings and credit, social marketing of condoms, and self-regulatory boards in sex work sites to prevent trafficking.

The following is an excerpt from Durbar’s policy document on the inclusion of HIV positive sex workers in its work and leadership. It also offers insight into how stigma, violence and criminalization fuel HIV risk. In this document, “+ve” means “HIV positive.” It can be found in its entirety at http://www.durbar.org/new/a011_policy_document_on_psw.html.

DURBAR IS LIFE, AS LIFE IS DURBAR (Unstoppable)

Policy Document on Positive Sex Workers

... A significant proportion of the sex workers have good understanding about HIV transmission and high perception of personal risk. These findings challenge the premise of current approaches to reduce risks simply through raising awareness and knowledge. Our findings also indicate that sexual risk, when seen from the perspective of sex workers, has far more to do with our lack of power and inability to negotiate condom use in specific situations and with different types of partners. Thus, while some of us are willing to insist on condom use with clients, it is in the context of sexual coercion by the police, brothel owners, criminals and others that there is a greater risk for HIV as many of our friends are unable to negotiate safe sex....

Violence of stigma, criminalization, and abuse

Violence is one of the more dire realities confronted by us in India and elsewhere. A number of studies underscore how violence undermines the safety and survival of sex workers, as well as our ability to participate in HIV prevention programmes and protect ourselves from infection. In India, violence against sex workers is not only widespread, but ranges across the spectrum of labeling, stigma, extortion, discrimination, verbal, physical and sexual abuse, and denial of rights to those who demand justice for ourselves. The violence comes from goondas (landlords/landladies), malkins (labour contractors) in the sex sector and, from the police....



Linking them to +ve network & strengthening +ve network (for both men and women)

DURBAR has formed a network of positives and also has linkages with other organisations of the positives. This helps the positive to voice their needs in the various stages of their lives and in cases of disease progression. This network of positives [stands] by the side of other positives who are being segregated from the community because of their positive status. Stigma and discrimination against an already oppressed minority of sex workers [is] doubled on the sole pretext of their being positive, and it is here that our network intervenes.

Developing social support network

Instead of labeling us sex workers as immoral, deviants, vectors, or victims, the society should view us as human beings, like any other, in need of and entitled to good health, dignity and a life free from violence and stigma in our own right....

Durbar has made a policy decision to reserve 10% of recruitment from the positive sex-workers

DURBAR with staff strength of over 800 has spread the reach of her work all over India. People from all strata of life had been working day and night to make DURBAR what it is at present. Staffs at various posts are recruited at regular intervals and generally the sex workers and their children are given priority in this matter. DURBAR has also made it a policy to reserve 10% of the quota for the positive sex workers so that they are never left behind. It is to make them understand that they are truly a part of this community-based organization and thus give them a new lease of life from the fear of death and that of being left out....

TAKE ACTION — WHAT YOU CAN DO

If you're part of a sex worker activist project and would like to learn from others doing this work, contact the following groups for insight and inspiration:

Different Avenues

Washington, DC

202-829-2103

www.differentavenues.org

Different Avenues is a peer-led organization working for the rights, health and safety of people at high risk for HIV, and fighting violence and discrimination. The organization works across labels and identities to envision a world where our communities live with justice and well-being. The majority of its constituents are youth and young adults, people who are homeless or just trying to get by, and people who formally or informally exchange sex for things they need. Most of its work is local, but Different Avenues also does its best to support national and global movements for social justice.



Project SAFE

Philadelphia
866-509-SAFE

<http://www.safephila.org>

SAFE serves women, including transwomen, and distributes a Bad Date Sheet to help street-based sex workers avoid clients who have attacked other women or stolen their money. Workers call SAFE's hotline or invite SAFE volunteers to visit them at home (where they feel safer talking than in the street) and give a detailed physical description of the attacker and what happened. Reports are anonymous and shared only with women. This keeps the information from johns and the police (who may arrest or dismiss a sex worker trying to report a rape), builds trust and community, and helps women define what rape is and be heard without being stigmatized.

Stella

Montreal
514-285-1599

<http://www.chezstella.org>

Stella, a broad-based sex worker activist group in Montreal, Canada, also has a Bad Tricks and Assaulters List, with a form for the descriptions available online.

US Prostitutes' Collective

415-626-4114

<http://www.prostitutescollective.net>

Last spring, San Francisco activists, led by the US Prostitutes Collective, held a Stand-In on a corner where mass arrests of sex workers occurred. By standing in solidarity on the stroll, community members demonstrated that many neighbors do not support arrests and deportation – or other residents who harass or throw eggs at sex workers.

Young Women's Empowerment Project (YWEP)

Chicago
773-728-0127

www.youarepriceless.org

YWEP trains girls and young women ages 12 to 23 in the sex trade and street economies as paid peer educators and outreach workers to support other girls in the sex trade and share how to take care of their bodies, emotions, relationships, money, rights, options, and their whole selves. Led by girls trained in the program, YWEP offers a safe space, referrals to social services, harm reduction information about staying safe while using drugs or doing sex work, and a zine by and for girls in the sex trade and street economies. Based on the experience of girls in the sex trade that the police will not protect them, YWEP advocates ways to resist violence without relying on the police. Strategies include self-defense; safe houses; self-healing through spoken word, zines, acupuncture, herbs and massage; allies who can help resist violence and make it unacceptable in the community; and "sisterhood in the hood" – respecting other girls instead of judging them.



To support the work of sex worker activists globally and resist the anti-prostitution pledge:

- 1) Show "Taking the Pledge," a free video from the [International Network of Sex Work Projects](http://www.sexworkersproject.org), and hold discussions in your community or organization. The film can be viewed online at sexworkerspresent.blip.tv. A curriculum to help facilitate your discussion can be found at www.sexworkersproject.org. "Taking the Pledge" is a 13-minute film about the ways that the anti-prostitution pledge required for U.S. funding has affected sex workers around the world. It features interviews with sex workers from Bangladesh, Brazil, Cambodia, Mali, Thailand and more.
- 2) Write letters to the editor of your local paper and to your representatives in Congress opposing the anti-prostitution pledge. You can do this powerfully as a group after watching the video together!
- 3) Call Healy Thompson, Senior Associate for Advocacy and Outreach at the [Center for Health and Gender Equity \(CHANGE\)](http://www.change.org) at 301-270-1182 to get more involved in resisting the pledge.

The advertisement is a black and white flyer with purple and red text. It features several images: a couple in a physical relationship, a red high-heeled shoe, a red syringe, and a person in a medical setting. The text provides information about free, confidential, and compassionate drop-in care services.

Do you know how to put a condom on with your mouth? When you go on a date do you have friends you can tell where you're going? Can you make a "dick check" sexy? Who can you talk to after a not-so-great day?

Have you thought about taking a self-defense class? Where could you get some tips from other workers? If you got arrested who would you call? When's the last time you got a massage just for you? Do you know where to get a free checkup if you want one?

Free, Confidential, Compassionate, Nonjudgmental Drop-in Care

Tuesday 12 – 3 pm: STI Counseling & Testing
Tuesday 4 – 6pm: Syringe Exchange

Wednesday 6 – 9pm: Primary Medical Care
Thursday 6 – 9 pm: Transgender Health Care

For Sex Workers, Adult Entertainers, Erotic Service Providers and their current partners

1372 Mission Street, San Francisco, CA 94103
415.554.8494 • www.stjamesinfirmary.org

St. James Infirmary in San Francisco, run by sex workers for sex workers, provides free, non-judgmental healthcare.



RESOURCES

Bilingual Links:

Center for Health and Gender Equity (CHANGE) Policy Brief: Implications of U.S. Policy Restrictions for Programs Aimed at Commercial Sex Workers and Victims of Trafficking Worldwide (PDF).

English: www.genderhealth.org/pubs/ProstitutionOathImplications.pdf

Español: www.genderhealth.org/pubs/ProstitutionOathImplicationsE.pdf

This document is from November 2005, but remains an accurate overview of the anti-prostitution pledge and what it means. The document includes recommendations for lawmakers.

Sex workers of Apizaco, Tlaxcala, Mexico meet with the Zapatistas' Other Campaign (2006)

English: www.allwomenscount.net/EWC_Sex_Workers/MexicoSexWorkersEnglish.htm

Español: www.allwomenscount.net/EWC_Sex_Workers/MexicoSexWorkersSpanish.htm

Addressed to sex workers and supporters of the Zapatistas' Other Campaign (a movement of marginalized people against capitalism and allied with the massive teachers' strike in Oaxaca), the CNUC (Women's Rights Network Collective) of Apizaco, in the state of Tlaxcala, Mexico, calls for sex workers across Mexico to fight for their rights together.

English Links:

Desiree Alliance

A coalition of sex workers, health professionals, social scientists, professional sex educators, and supporters working to reinvigorate the U.S. sex workers' rights movement.

\$pread Magazine

A magazine for sex workers, sex worker outreach and labor rights.

Bound, Not Gagged

A blog for sex workers to respond to the way they are portrayed in the media in the wake of the Deborah Jeane Palfrey scandal.

The Manual (PDF, 2002)

Tips for providers planning services for male sex workers. Compiled by the European Network Male Prostitution, which lost funding in 2003 and dissolved into Correlation, the European Network Social Inclusion and Health.

Sex Worker Health and Rights: Where is the Funding? (PDF, 2006)

This report from Sexual Health and Rights Project (SHARP) of the Open Society Institute examines issues related to current international funding of sex worker projects.



Research for Sex Work

Annual journal for the exchange of ideas, experiences, observations and research on sex work and HIV prevention, published by the [Network of Sex Work Projects](#).

Best Practices Policy Project

Practical guides for how to make your advocacy and organization more accountable to diverse communities of sex workers.

Safety in the Workplace: OSHA Interventions Could Make a Difference (2007)

Veteran activist Priscilla Alexander's detailed proposal for how to improve working conditions in the field of sex work, both for labor rights and to prevent HIV and violence.

End Demand Fact Sheet

Sex worker activist critique of "end demand" programs, such as John's Schools or efforts to arrest clients instead of sex workers, which increase workers' risk for violence and HIV, and channel hard-won social service funding into policing efforts.

Sex Workers Outreach Project-USA

A national network of grassroots sex worker activist groups.

Live Nude Girls Unite! (2000, available on DVD and VHS)

This political documentary with a sexy sense of humor tells the story of how exotic dancers at San Francisco's Lusty Lady unionized their shop.

Sex Worker Education and Advocacy Taskforce (SWEAT)

Cape Town, South Africa, sex worker activist group.

Links en Español:

[Red de Trabajadoras Sexuales de Latinoamerica y el Caribe](#)

Network of sex worker activist groups in Latin America and the Caribbean.

["Atreverse a cruzar fronteras: Migrantes como protagonistas"](#) (PDF, 2006)

An academic article by Laura María Agustín about the rights of migrant sex workers, with a bibliography of research about sex work and migration.

[Controles sanitarios obligatorios violan los derechos de trabajadoras sexuales](#)

News article about sex workers' human rights in Mexico City.

[Asociacion de Mujeres Meretrices de la Argentina \(ammar\)](#)

Sex workers in Argentina united to defend their human rights.



Top Ten Positive Changes for Agency Staff

By the Young Women's Empowerment Project (YWEP)

This document was created by YWEP, a group of girls and young women in Chicago, aged 12 to 23, with experience in the sex trade and street economies. Based on their firsthand knowledge of what has worked – or not worked – for them both as young girls looking for help and youth organizers offering help, these guidelines can help adult activists and social service providers make their efforts more respectful and effective. In the Chicago area, YWEP offers trainings and popular education for girls, as well as trainings for adults (through the Harm Reduction Training Collaborative). They can be reached at 773-728-0127. On its website, www.youarepriceless.org, YWEP offers this document and other resources to download.

YOUTH WORKERS – WANT TO HELP GIRLS IN YOUR YOUTH PROGRAM WHO TRADE SEX FOR MONEY OR SURVIVAL NEEDS?

- 1) Ask young people currently involved in your program about what they know on this issue. Ask on a one-to-one basis or call for a group to ask what they know.
- 2) Create a welcoming environment to tell you about it – keep disclosures private (don't let other youth know, and staff should only talk in private when necessary) and make it known that you are open to listening without judging.
- 3) Do not have negative consequences for disclosing to staff, like losing level, suspension, or making youth leave your program. Work together to find what the young person wants or needs in their life.
- 4) Do not assume you can tell if someone has been involved. Ask and listen first.
- 5) Actively discourage youth and staff from making negative, hurtful comments or putdowns about youth who are believed to be involved in trading sex for money or sexually active with more than one partner at a time.
- 6) Provide options; don't just say it's wrong. Young people feel bad enough already – they need real options and resources.
- 7) Be aware that youth are NOT the source of the problem. Adults create the demand, control the money, make home life unsafe to the point that youth need to leave, sexualize youth instead of providing real opportunities and don't care enough about youth to stop.
- 8) Provide harm reduction options for youth involved in your program while they are still involved in trading sex for money or survival needs, including options to take care of their health and someone to talk with who doesn't emphasize exit. This builds trust and makes youth healthier upon exit.



- 9) Be aware that exit from the sex trade is a process. The need to deal with emotions and life issues, the need for survival, job possibilities, and life skills, and the need to find support to make that change all take a long time. There are no quick changes or magic words.
- 10) Offer outside assistance like counselors or the Young Women’s Empowerment Project to girls who are impacted by the sex trade – but don’t require it.

Letters to the Editor Welcome!

We appreciate hearing from you about specific articles and issues of *Solidarity Project*. Your input helps *Solidarity Project* be relevant to our readership while remaining true to CHAMP’s mission. To contribute a letter, please email champ@champnetwork.org or write to one of the addresses below. If you’d rather not include your name with your letter, we will respect your confidentiality. But please provide contact information in case we need to get in touch with you for clarification or verification.

We look forward to hearing from you!



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