

Fostering Enabling Legal and Policy Environments to Protect the Health and Rights of Sex Workers

Johannesburg, South Africa, June 22-24, 2006

Organised and sponsored by the Sexual Health and Rights Project (SHARP) and Law and Health Initiative (LAHI) of Open Society Institute (OSI), this meeting brought together sex workers, service providers, human rights advocates, researchers and others to discuss how legal and regulatory environments affect sex workers' health and human rights.

The meeting also addressed the growing backlash against sex-worker health strategies that focus on the dignity and human rights of sex workers. In some countries, hiv-prevention projects that promoted sex-worker health through empowerment, condom use and protection of sex workers' human rights have had their funding eliminated.

The meeting was also intended to build connections between sex-worker groups and allied professionals that would promote sex worker self-advocacy as well as joint-advocacy for rights-based policy development globally.

In attendance were 35 geographically-diverse stakeholders together from five key groups (sex workers, service providers, researchers, legal and policy experts, and human rights activists). The conference objectives were:

- to reach a common understanding of the elements that regulate sex work globally and map the various regimes of official control
- to formulate core principles for public health, human rights and harm reduction approaches to sex work
- to explore issues which arise within and between constituencies in order to reduce barriers, expand common principles and increase shared goals

OSI provided resources for participants which included:

- case studies of different jurisdictions with specific legal and regulatory frameworks
- a resource guide to donor support for sex worker policy and service initiatives
- materials and research related to sex workers' health and rights on compact disc

OSI has published the recommendations resulting from the meeting in a report titled: *Fostering Enabling Legal and Policy Environments to Protect the Health and Rights of Sex Workers: A Report from Johannesburg, South Africa* (PDF: [SHARP-FOSTERING.PDF](#)).

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