

# 'Positive Effects' of Swedish Sex Purchase Ban Heavily Exaggerated, New Report Finds

Last year the Swedish Association for Sexuality Education (RFSU) commissioned a research report to investigate the effects of the Swedish ban against sex purchase, introduced in 1999. RFSU wanted an independent overview of earlier studies to be used as a foundation for a congressional decision in June 2015.

The report was presented on 2<sup>nd</sup> February and has received much media attention. In an interview with DN (Dagens Nyheter) published the same day, RFSU's president Kristina Ljungros, says that there is no evidence that the demand has declined to the extent claimed by the 2010 state-led evaluation and that they are worried on the impact the ban has on sex workers.

The report, conducted by Charlotta Holmström at Malmö University, concludes that the ban's positive effects have been heavily exaggerated and have led to increased vulnerability for sex workers. The studies that Holmström refers to show that the risks involved in selling sex have increased. The fear of being arrested has led to a situation where clients are seeing sex workers at their chosen venue (home or hotel) instead of meeting them at a place chosen by the sex workers. This means that sex workers are forced to meet clients under unsafe circumstances, as they have no idea who they will meet beforehand.

Holmström says in the DN article that she was mainly surprised that no one had investigated how sex workers said they were impacted by the law. In the DN article she also says that the expressed ambition of the law was to combine it with social support services, which is something that has not been realised to a sufficient degree.

"Without parallel and wide-spread investments in support services, the law seems to achieve different results than what was initially expected," says Charlotta Holmström, accordingly to DN. She also notes that one of the consequences of the law is that the popular support for a prohibition of selling sex seems to have increased, which can be understood as a change in attitudes. The criminalisation of clients has led to an attitude which perceives the person who sells sex as criminal.

Holmström is referring to a study where 52 % of the respondents says that they think that the selling of sexual services also should be criminalised, compared to 30 % before the ban was introduced. President Kristina Ljungros of RFSU says to DN that this is a change in attitudes that they really don't want to see, since sex workers is about some of the most vulnerable people in our society. Ljungros says to DN that the report demonstrates a need to revise the legislation. "I understand the intention with the Swedish law. But if it doesn't work, we have to consider other alternatives," she says.

Source:  
<http://www.dn.se/nyheter/sverige/sex-kopslag-far-underkant/>

## All Charges Dropped in Monica Jones Case



The long-running case against Monica Jones for "manifesting prostitution" has finally been dropped, one month after her April 2014 conviction was overturned in an Arizona court of appeals.

In March 2013 Jones accepted a lift from an undercover policeman in an anti-prostitution sting carried out by Project ROSE, a programme that arrested sex workers then forced them into diversion programmes in order to avoid charges — programmes Jones had gone through before and which she described as "humiliating." As a transgender woman of colour and known to local police for her opposition to Project ROSE, Jones was profiled as a sex worker and charged under an anti-prostitution statute that allows for very broad interpretations as to who is soliciting sex.

The City of Phoenix's anti-prostitution laws include the following clause:

*A person is guilty of a misdemeanor who:*

*Is in a public place, a place open to public view or in a motor vehicle on a public roadway and manifests an intent to commit or solicit an act of prostitution. Among the circumstances that may be considered in determining whether such an intent is manifested are: that the person repeatedly beckons to, stops or attempts to stop or engage passers-by in conversation or repeatedly, stops or attempts to stop, motor vehicle operators by hailing, waiving of arms or any other bodily gesture; that the person inquires whether a potential patron, procurer or prostitute is a police officer or searches for articles that would identify a police officer; or that the person requests the touching or exposure of genitals or female breast;*

The police officer's decision to arrest her hinged on the fact that Jones was wearing a tight-fitting black dress when she got into his car, leading her attorney to ask in **the appeal brief**: "Is it impermissible to flirt with someone on the street or in a car? **Sell coffee in a bathing suit in a place open to public view**? Hail a cab? Wear a 'tight fitting black dress'? It is difficult to imagine how anyone on a Phoenix street (or in a car) would know if he or she were violating the Code, it criminalises ordinary people, doing ordinary things — things like walking a certain way and asking certain questions — which they cannot know are against the law."

While the closure of the case is good news for Jones, it also means that she will not have the chance to challenge the law under which she was charged.

"The law is still on the books, so they could send out officers to places where there is a lot of foot traffic and arrest people who are not traditionally empowered to push back against the police," attorney Jean-Jacques Cabou **told Buzzfeed News**. "Whether the city will do that after all the scrutiny of this law, I don't know. I hope not."

On February 11<sup>th</sup>, Jones and her legal team appealed to a higher court to throw out the law completely; the decision to drop her case came eight days later: timing that Cabou says is "coincidental to say the least."

Cabou said there is a potential that city officials would consider

repealing the law, but if not, "we'll blow it up the next time someone brings a case."

In an earlier interview with **Buzzfeed News**, Jones said: "I think there is a bigger issue that needs to be addressed. This law needs to be thrown out because it unfairly targets women, transgender women, and people of colour living in poverty. Police wouldn't [arrest] a man standing on the corner talking to a passer-by."

## WHO consultation – deadline 30<sup>th</sup> April

**Opportunity to take part in the WHO consultation on their three related global health sector strategies: HIV; viral hepatitis; and sexually transmitted infections (STIs).**

**Source: WHO communication follows below:**

The 2016-2021 strategies will follow a similar structure, seek to ensure critical linkages across, and synergies between, these important health areas, and, will be finalised for consideration by the 69th World Health Assembly in May 2016. While the HIV and STI focused drafts build on previous strategies this will be the first ever global health sector strategy for viral hepatitis.

We are now seeking stakeholder input into these strategies. From the following links you can access an online survey as well as early drafts of the three strategies and other background documents.

**The deadline for responses is 30 April 2015.**

**HIV:**  
<http://www.who.int/hiv/strategy2016-2021/en/>

**Viral hepatitis:**  
<http://www.who.int/hiv/topics/hepatitis/strategy2016-2021/en/>

**STIs:**  
<http://www.who.int/reproductivehealth/ghs-strategies/en/>

Responses from individuals, organisations and/or consolidated responses from constituency groups are welcome. A summary of the consultation will be compiled into a

report to be published in June 2015 and will be shared with global partners - including partners also developing strategies for the post-2015 period. Notably, **UNAIDS** is developing a multi-sectoral HIV strategy for 2016-2021 with a series of stakeholder and online consultations. WHO's HIV strategy will form a critical and complementary component of the broader UNAIDS effort, and will also be informed by the UNAIDS strategy development process. The **Global Fund** is also developing a strategy for 2017-2021 and results from our consultation process will be shared appropriately.

We are also embarking on a number of regional, civil society and other stakeholder consultations – a summary of opportunities to engage in the strategy development process is included in the above web links. We are coordinating with the UNAIDS Secretariat in planning the consultations related to HIV to ensure coherence across the WHO and UNAIDS processes and inputs. We hope that you will be able to contribute to both processes.

Please take time to complete the survey(s) relevant to you. Your inputs are important to us - while all three health areas have generated significant progress in recent years, gains are unevenly and inequitably distributed, disease incidence is increasing in some countries and regions, and too many new infections are still occurring particularly among key populations. Most people in need still do not have access to available and emerging treatments. The world needs a revitalised effort to change the trajectory of the responses to HIV, viral hepatitis and STIs and your inputs to the 2016-2021 strategies will help ensure we have a robust strategic framework in place to guide the health sector response.

## NSWP Website – NEW LOOK

Here at NSWP we have just undertaken a major re-fresh of our website. The new design is more user-friendly and more compatible for viewing on your smart-phone.

The website still includes all our usual features, publications, news stories, profiles and a few more besides! **Take a look around our new-look website [here](#).**

## Sex Workers Remember Shannon Williams

**Shannon Williams, a tireless advocate for sex worker rights, died on January 20th in San Francisco. She was 48 years old and had been taken off life support upon her request following complications from a recently discovered brain tumour.**

A former Berkeley High School teacher, Williams became involved with the sex worker rights movement after being arrested in August 2003 during a police sting operation in Oakland. Her outing as a school teacher charged with prostitution garnered national attention, which she directed into advocacy for the rights of sex workers.

In December 2003, Williams entered a plea of no contest to disturbing the peace in Alameda County Superior Court and was sentenced to unsupervised probation. She had previously entered a not-guilty plea, protesting the charges and accusing undercover Oakland police officers of misconduct, saying they taunted her during the arrest, but she later changed her mind citing the pressure the case had put on her friends and family.

Her case helped lead to the formation of the **Sex Workers Outreach Project – USA** (SWOP-USA), which was **founded by Robyn Few**, following her own arrest on prostitution charges, in October 2003. SWOP now has 15 chapters across the United States. Few passed away in September 2012.

"Her arrest, her story, it put SWOP on the map," Naomi Akers, executive director of the **St. James Infirmary** told **the Contra Costa Times**. At the time of Williams' death, she was a peer counsellor St. James Infirmary and sat on the board of directors for SWOP-USA.

"Her arrest reignited her activism spirit, her social justice principals and gauged those which she had demonstrated for several decades up to this point," Akers said. "Once the initial trauma of the shock wore off she stopped and said, 'This is wrong, I wasn't doing anything wrong. This is

a consensual act between two adults behind closed doors and has nothing to do with the classroom. This should be decriminalised."

"At her (family) memorial (last week) and going through her pictures for it I really saw how ingrained social justice was in the core of who she was. She'd been engaged in activism since such a young age -- had so many friends in so many social justice movements from anti-war campaigning to anti prison work. It was so amazing how many people were at her service."

SWOP – Bay Area held a public memorial service at the Center for Sex and Culture in San Francisco, and family and friends hosted a celebration of Williams' life in Oakland.

**SWOP Bay Area wrote:**

*"Shannon was an infinitely practical woman, compassionate and loving, but able to focus on the good that comes out of bad circumstances. It is our hope that Shannon's impact in our lives will help guide us to better support for our community, and better love and support for our own selves. This is the side of Shannon we are hoping to both celebrate the existence of and mourn the loss of, the woman who would be the first in line to pick up the dropped banner and continue marching on."*

## GAATW Anti-Trafficking Review: Call for Papers



***The Anti-Trafficking Review published by GAATW is calling for papers for a themed issue entitled 'Prosecuting Human Trafficking.'***

***Deadline for submissions is 15th July 2015.***

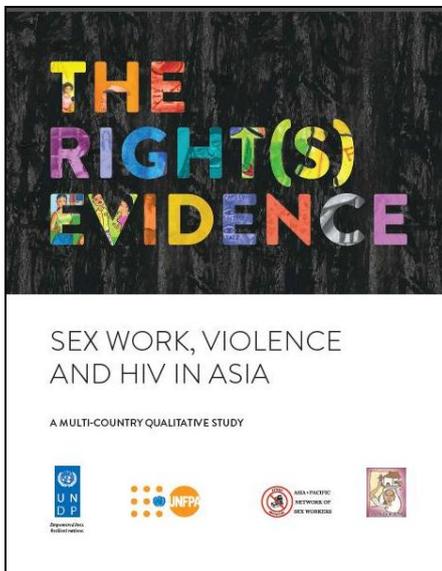
Government officials, criminal justice practitioners and others working in the anti-trafficking field assert that ending the current high levels of impunity enjoyed by traffickers, and securing justice for those who have been trafficked, requires vigorous prosecution of trafficking crimes. However some have pointed out that pressures to prosecute, particularly when placed on underdeveloped criminal justice systems, have led to poor quality prosecutions that target lower level offenders; unfair and unsafe prosecutions that do not respect basic criminal justice standards; and **disproportionate and politically motivated targeting of certain sectors including the sex industry.**

The emphasis on prosecutions has also been identified as contributing to **violations of the rights of persons who have been trafficked** - for example through laws and policies that compel cooperation with criminal justice agencies or make assistance conditional on such cooperation. More generally, concerns have been expressed that the focus on prosecutions has been at the expense of attention to victims' rights including their right to protection, support and remedies.

For details on the topics the issue will look at and how to submit see the **full story on our website here**. You can also view more information via GAATW **here** and **here**.

## The Right Process for the Right(s) Evidence

### Research Reveals High Levels of Violence against Sex Workers



In the last issue we reported that this research project had been awarded the received the first Robert Carr Research Award in July at the 20<sup>th</sup> International AIDS Conference, in Melbourne. Now you can read the [report itself](#), a helpful [summary report](#) and also the publication documenting the process for the [collaborative research project](#) that undertook the research.

Press release from March 3, YANGON: Sex workers experience extreme violence at work, in health care and custodial settings, in their neighbourhoods and homes, according to a study conducted in four Asian countries.

Research for **The Right(s) Evidence: Sex Work, Violence and HIV in Asia** of the study which comprised a total of 123 peer-to-peer in-depth qualitative interviews with female, male and transgender sex workers and key informants was carried out in Indonesia (Jakarta), Myanmar

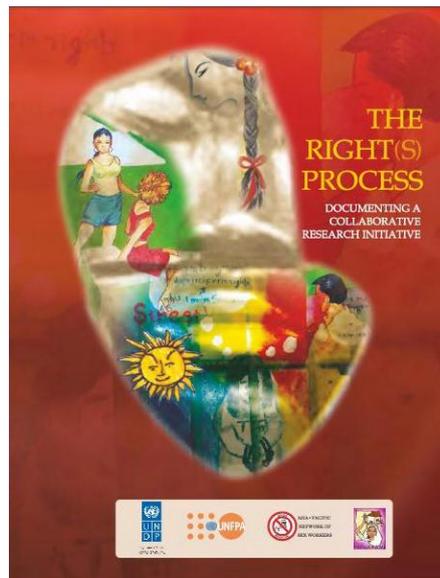
(Yangon), Nepal (Kathmandu) and Sri Lanka (Colombo).

*“The research provides sound evidence that the violence that sex workers experience denies them their fundamental human rights and contributes to the spread of HIV,”* said Meena Saraswathi Seshu, from Centre for Advocacy on Stigma and Marginalisation, one of the co-authors of the report.

“We need to reduce HIV prevalence among the key population in Myanmar. Towards this, we need to have a strong collaboration and cooperation between community, UN agencies and government to address this issue,” said Dr. Myo Thant, Regional Officer, National AIDS Program, Myanmar.

A crucial aspect of the research was the deep engagement of sex workers in the planning and implementation of the research. “We need to listen to voices from the ground as well as of all stakeholders to ensure grounded findings and recommendations. Advocacy must be a joint initiative,” said Julia Cabassi, UNFPA, also a co-author of the report.

**The Right(s) Process: Documenting a Collaborative Research Initiative** launched on **International Sex Workers’ Rights Day**, authored by Aarthi Pai, CASAM, showcases this exceptional research collaboration.



“Through a partnership between government, civil society and the UN

system as equal partners to address violence against sex workers, we hope to shape the steps for greater engagement around reducing this violence,” said Marta Vallejo Mestres, UNDP, another co-author.

*“Although there are challenges, tremendous potential exists in the collaboration between multiple government sectors and communities. This partnership can also help to position this work within a range of relevant agendas, including gender based violence, HIV, human rights (including labour rights), rule of law and access to justice,”* said Brianna Harrison, UNAIDS.

“We hear that sex workers face violence but we did not have the evidence to identify the causes and find solutions. Through this research we have the evidence and through the process report we have documentation to show how best to gather the evidence!” said Kay Thi Win, Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers, and a researcher for the study.

#### The main findings:

- Sex workers in all study sites experienced physical, sexual, emotional and economic violence which has lifelong and life-threatening consequences for their physical, mental and sexual health.
- Sex workers experienced specific types of violence because of their work, such as sexual extortion and harassment by the police for carrying condoms.
- Police personnel and clients were the most commonly cited people who used violence against sex workers, across study sites and gender categories.
- Police violence fuelled impunity and increased sex workers’ vulnerability to client violence.
- Criminalisation of various aspects of sex work and male-to-male sex as well as law enforcement practices increased the incidence of violence by promoting impunity, pushing sex work underground, reducing sex workers’ ability to negotiate safe work practices and by increasing stigma and discrimination.

- Sex workers experienced specific forms of violence even outside their work setting because of their work, such as violence & harassment by neighbours & the general public and discrimination and abuse in health settings.
- Safe workplaces, including those with more well-defined workplace safety frameworks, decent work conditions, responsible and responsive establishment owners or managers and supportive employers and co-workers reduced the risk of violence and HIV
- Collectivisation, strong sex worker-led networks and individual access to knowledge and skills to conduct sex work more safely.

*“A culture of impunity in which perpetrators of violence are not held accountable undermines sex workers’ access to justice and creates an environment in which violence against sex workers is normalized and justified. The stigma and discrimination associated with sex work must end.”*

**Ruth Morgan Thomas, Global Coordinator of NSWP.**

The following **recommendations** based on the findings address reform of laws, law enforcement practices and policies and programmes to prevent and respond to violence against female, male and transgender sex workers in the region.

- Reform punitive laws, policies and law enforcement practices to protect sex workers’ rights, including the right to be free of violence.
- End impunity of those who commit violence against sex workers.
- Strengthen sex workers’ access to justice, and empower sex workers with information about their rights.
- Recognise sex work as legitimate work and ensure that sex workers have legally enforceable rights to occupational health and safety protection.
- Improve sex workers’ access to sexual and reproductive health, HIV and gender-based violence services.

## Vast Majority of Sex Workers in France Oppose Criminalisation of their Clients

**As the French Senate prepared to debate a proposal to criminalise the clients of sex workers on Monday, March the 30<sup>th</sup> and Tuesday March the 31<sup>st</sup>, a university study showed that the vast majority of sex workers in France are opposed to the proposed new law.**

According **to the study** of more than 500 female, male and trans sex workers, the majority of them migrants, 98 percent are opposed to the criminalisation of their customers as they fear such a law would place them in danger. Several of the respondents said that even discussions of the proposal have had a negative effect on their lives, with a decrease in customers forcing them to take more risks.

Writing in **Le Plus de L’Obs**, French sex worker and activist, Thierry Schaffauser said:

“This should seem obvious, yet all sex workers who demonstrated or spoke against the criminalisation, were accused of representing only a privileged minority.

“The study shows, however, that this opposition is shared by all sex workers, regardless of nationality, type of sex work, and includes those who have not decided to do this work, believing this would place them further danger.

“Now that this data is confirmed by a scientific study, it reminds those who argue for the criminalisation that they do not do it for us, but against us. They will have to justify the reasons that lead them to ignore the opinion of those most affected, and can no longer claim to be our self-appointed protectors. They will have to explain why they know better than us what is good for us.”

The study also study provides an estimate of the number of sex workers who have been trafficked in France.

According to the researcher Nick Mai, 7% of respondents (11% of

migrant sex workers) are **potential** victims of trafficking.

“This figure,” writes Schaffauser, “is quite close to the estimates already known in the United Kingdom ( **7.8%** ), Denmark ( **4%** ), the Netherlands (8-10%) [ **1** ] and New Zealand ( **3.9%** ).

“It is however far from the 90 percent asserted without proof for years by **parliamentary socialists**, the **government** and the **militant prohibitionists**.

“This raises a question: the people who have lied for years were ignorant on the subject or (they have lied) simply to better manipulate public opinion?”

“In both cases, their credibility is seriously damaged. Not only do they have no legitimacy to speak on our behalf, but they distort our reality in the purpose of advancing a penalty that we do not want.

*“This would not be so bad if the penalty had no disastrous consequences on our lives. Yet this is the case. Risks of isolation, increased exploitation, violence and stigma are reported in report after report.”*

Hundreds of foreign sex workers, the majority of them undocumented Chinese immigrants, **rallied against the proposal** in Paris’ Place Pigalle on Saturday, the 28<sup>th</sup> of March.

Some of the Chinese sex workers, from the group **Steel Roses**, have signed a petition to urge the French government to cancel the motion.

A Chinese sex worker known as Ai Ying interviewed by Radio France International (RFI) said punishing clients will hurt their earnings and they will be exposed to greater dangers and problems. Ai Ying said the new law will not help them change their line of work, because they are not likely to get a job without a residency permit.

The New York Daily News has also **reported** that the proposal will include outlawing “looking like a prostitute,” of Chloe Navarro from **STRASS** said: “It is making criminals of women for how they dress, and victimising prostitutes for doing their job and aggravating their working conditions.”

## The Legal Situation in Canada: Update

Source: Triple X

### BACKGROUND

In December 2013, the Supreme Court of Canada (Bedford Decision) struck down all three sections of the Criminal Code that outlawed prostitution, on the grounds that the laws violated sex workers' right to security of the person. In other words, the laws prevented sex workers from employing precautions that would increase their safety on the job. The Court gave the government one year to make new laws.

Enacted in December, 2014, The Protection of Communities and Exploited Persons Act (PCEPA) makes it a crime to:

- purchase sex;
- communicate for the purpose of purchasing sex;
- habitually keep the company of or benefit materially from a sex worker, unless you are in a legitimate family or business relationship -- provided you can prove that you are not forcing or encouraging the sex worker to sell sex; you are not involved together in a commercial sex enterprise; and you are not providing alcohol or drugs.

Sex workers are prohibited from working or communicating near schools, playgrounds, day-care centres.

Also, it is illegal to advertise sex services provided by anyone but yourself, and your advertising must not explicitly offer sex for sale.

**According to Justice Minister Peter Mackay (Sep. 9, 2014)**

"Let us be clear about Bill C-36's ultimate objective: that is to reduce the demand for prostitution with a view towards discouraging entry into it, deterring participation in it and ultimately abolishing it to greatest extent possible."

### 2015 CRIMINAL CODE OF CANADA (C-46)

The changes in law enacted by PCEPA (Bill C-36 2014) are now part of the Criminal Code Of Canada.

Although Section 210 was struck down by the Bedford Decision, it remains in the Code because "Bawdy House" is still defined as a place that is kept by one or more persons for:

"the practice of acts of indecency." Acts of indecency include sexual activity involving more than two people, or in some way are in public view (such as live sex act theatres or possibly swingers clubs and gay bath houses unless they are registered private members clubs.)

### SECTION 213

(Offences in Relation to Offering, Providing or Obtaining Sexual Services for Consideration) replaced the former law, 'Communicating in a Public Place for the Purpose of Prostitution'.

### SECTION 286

(Commodification of Sexual Activity) makes it a new crime to pay for sex. And, it is a crime to live with, or regularly be in the company of sex workers (with exceptions for family and landlords etc.).

PCEPA also made changes to Section 164 which outlines rules for search, seizure and forfeiture of materials. The list now includes materials that advertise sexual services. This means that police can get a warrant to search your home or business and seize your property such as computers and cell phones if they can show cause to the judge that there are illegal sex work ads.

In addition, PCEPA also amended Section 183 (Invasion of Privacy). Police can now get a warrant to intercept private communications if those communications relate if they can show a judge that there are communications to obtain sexual services. In other words, it is now legal for police to tap a sex worker's phone or email account in order to find and arrest clients. For the full text of the laws, see [here](#).

### CONSEQUENCES OF PCEPA

January 21, 2015, in Hamilton, Ontario, the **first charges were laid** under the new law 286.4 (Advertising Sexual Services) in conjunction with charges that involve a minor (under 18 years). On January 23, **second charges for Advertising Sexual Services were laid** in Toronto, Ontario for on-line ads also involving a minor.

On March 25, the Premier of Saskatchewan **announced that strip clubs will be banned throughout the province**. It has only been a year since the province lifted a ban on nude dancing in clubs that served alcohol. According to the Premier Brad Wall:

"Let's make sure we're not allowing for any opportunity for organized crime to increase its footprint or for there for ever to be an increase in human trafficking that we know is happening."

On March 26, Premier Wall announced that **massage parlours in Saskatchewan** also presented a problem.

"These kinds of businesses involve potential Criminal Code infractions, which are the federal government's responsibility," he said. "Is there more that the province can do? I think there is, in this general area."

The Province of Saskatchewan is taking direction from the Federal Conservatives' explicit intentions with the new sexual services laws.

According to Bob Dechert, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Justice, House of Commons Debate, June 12, 2014.

"The bill would also criminalize where a person procures another person's prostitution or if the benefit is received in the context of a commercial enterprise that offers sexual services for sale, such as a strip club, a massage parlour, or an escort agency in which prostitution takes place. We know those types of businesses are often run by criminal organizations, such as gangs and the Mafia. That is the kind of behaviour we want to criminalize. It is not what the women who are exploited are doing, but the people who are actually exploiting them."

## Sex Worker Advocates Speak at a UN Panel

**On Friday, March the 13th, several sex worker advocates addressed a parallel event during the Committee on the Status of Women Forum at the United Nations in New York City.**

The session, which was called "What's Sex Got To Do With It: Linking Advocacy for Sex Workers' Rights and Respect for all Gender

Identities,” featured guest speakers from NSWP member group **Legalife** in the Ukraine; the South Africa-based **S.H.E** (Social, Health and Empowerment Feminist Collective of Transgender and Intersex Women of Africa); **Voices of Women Media** from The Netherlands, and **SWOP-Phoenix** and NSWP member group **Best Practices Policy Project** (BPPP) both from the United States.

First to speak, via Skype and an interpreter, was Elena from Legalife, who spoke at length about rights violations of sex workers and trans women in the Ukraine, even from institutions that are supposed to protect them. She also told the panel about the prohibitive barriers to changing gender in the Ukraine, which, she said, is restricted to only people over 25, who are unmarried, do not have children, and who have not committed “anti-social” behaviour (for example, sex work). Someone wishing to change their gender, said Elena, would have to go to a psychiatric hospital ward for 45 days of observation (a trans woman would be placed in a men’s ward) and then report to a special commission in Kiev, which only meets twice a year.

Leigh Ann from S.H.E then spoke about the situation in South Africa, highlighting the intersections of race, class and privilege. “We still feel remnants from Apartheid,” she said, which influences identity and social and economic status.

“There is no real feminist politic on sex work or around trans issues,” she said. “The way that sex work is positioned within feminism is with the “bird with a broken wing” approach – that is more harmful than useful.” She also mentioned that, as is often the case, the HIV conversation is the only conceivable space for sex workers to get a foot in the development policy door.

Leigh went on to talk about NSWP member group **SWEAT**’s “A Job is a Job” campaign, and said that the fact we were having a conversation about such issues in such a conservation space is “a turning point.”

Monica Jones, representing SWOP-Phoenix, spoke about her much-publicised court battle for charges of “manifesting prostitution.” But, she said, “that story does not narrate my whole life.” Speaking about Project

ROSE, the diversion programme she protested against, she said: “I want to tell my own story – they want to tell it for me.”

All the high costs that come with being a trans woman (health care, legal issues, etc.) “make sex work the best option for us,” she said. “When I went into sex work, I wanted to thrive. I wanted to live. I wanted to have the things that I wanted to have. I didn’t want to go hungry. I didn’t want to choose between hormones and food, so I went into sex work. Where once society told me I was a freak ... people told me I was beautiful ... and I got paid for it too.”

Vivien Wenli from Voices of Women Media spoke about the experience of migrant sex workers in Amsterdam and the closure of windows, as well as increased criminalisation in Hong Kong.

Working with sex workers in Amsterdam and Hong Kong, the organisation produced a magazine and a film about their real-life experiences. The film was screened in one of Amsterdam’s biggest brothels.

The workers in Amsterdam, she said, told her that the windows are the safest way to work because workers can see and assess clients prior to accepting them, and they feel protected by their neighbours, but now, because the city is trying to gentrify Amsterdam’s red-light district and force the windows to close, they are forced to work in more hidden away, and less safe, places.

Finally, Penelope from BPPP spoke about the great strides sex worker activists have made over the past 15 years, but recognised that sex worker groups are still isolated from global funding discussions. “We should be included.” She said. “We can be agents of change.”

Representatives of US-based sex worker rights organisations, including Monica Jones, were also in **Geneva** recently to meet with members of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC), and to call for greater human rights protections. The United States will be reviewed by the United Nations during its Universal Periodic Review (UPR) in May 2015.

## Other headlines

[\*\*A Spanish Court Rules on Sex Workers’ Labour Rights\*\*](#)

[\*\*Sex Workers’ Group Takes On Criminalisation in California\*\*](#)

[\*\*Sex Workers Speak Out Against Washington’s Push to “End Demand”\*\*](#)

[\*\*Sex Workers Alliance Ireland Launch Sex Work Paper\*\*](#)

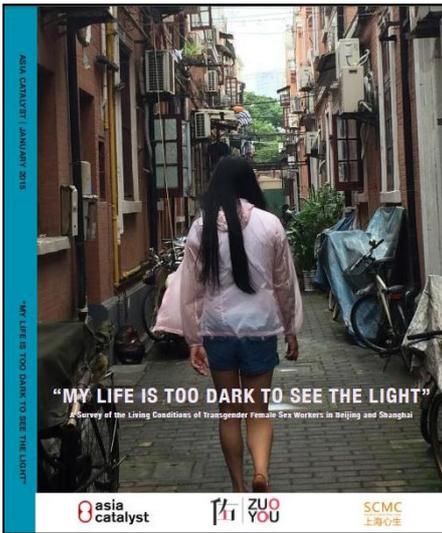
[\*\*New drop-in space for female sex workers who inject drugs to open in Kathmandu\*\*](#)

[\*\*Forum in the Dominican Republic Addresses Police Abuses of Sex Workers\*\*](#)

**Much more news is available on our website and on our Twitter**

# Publications

## Asia Catalyst releases report highlighting issues faced by Chinese trans\* sex workers



Asia Catalyst, an NGO which focuses on the health and human rights of marginalised communities in China and South East Asia recently released an extensive 79 page report, *“My Life is Too Dark to See the Light: A Survey of the Living Conditions of Transgender Female Sex Workers in Beijing and Shanghai”*.

Several local NGOs, the **Beijing Zuoyou Information Centre** and the Shanghai Commercial Sex Worker and Men who have Sex with Men Centre collaborated with Asia Catalyst to develop the report. Between December 2013 and September 2014, 70 trans\* sex workers were interviewed as key respondents for the research. The 35 trans\* sex workers interviewed in both Beijing and Shanghai all presented as women whilst engaging in sex work.

The report, which primarily explores the issues faced by Chinese trans\* sex workers identified that trans\* sex workers in China are

highly stigmatised and regularly experience discrimination and abuse from broader society, service providers, family members and state actors, including the police..

Despite the proliferation of sex workers in China, **sex work is criminalised**. According to the Asia Catalyst report, trans\* sex workers are some of the most marginalised sex workers in China, primarily due to broader society’s refusal to recognise the rights of trans\* people, Confucian standards of morality which discourage people from challenging gender roles, and socially institutionalised traditions which hold men in higher esteem than women.

Under Chinese law, being trans\* is not a crime; however, **only trans\* people who have fully transitioned are able to change their gender on official documents**. Trans\* sex workers report engaging in risky transitioning practices, including self-medicating with hormones as an alternative to accessing prohibitively expensive gender reassignment surgery options. In addition to the majority of Chinese trans\* sex workers lacking the economic means to access gender reassignment surgery, trans\* sex workers also report a distinct lack of medical professionals familiar with gender reassignment surgery issues and difficulty in accessing medical resources for transitioning.

Under Chinese policy, sex workers and trans\* people lack the protection of anti-discrimination laws, resulting in sex workers reporting regular abuses from the police and clients. The Asia Catalyst report indicates that over 60% of interviewees had been arrested by police, with many research participants reporting that they had been subject to, or threatened with, physical violence, extortion, entrapment and other forms of police harassment. Xiao Huli, a participant in the research articulated her experience with the police, saying, “Under normal circumstances, it’s not convenient to report things to the police, because we have an embarrassing identity that’s not approved. Although the law is supposed to apply equally to everyone, there are still limitations. This profession (sex work) isn’t out in the open, so if you go to the police, nothing good will come of it. It makes more sense to just suffer in silence.”

Due to the stigma associated with being both trans\* and a sex worker, 97% of the research participants reported that they are forced to live “hidden lives” and had left their home towns due to family issues. These participants identified that their families were not aware of their status as either sex workers or trans\* women.

The report also highlighted the sexual diversity of China’s trans\* sex worker community, with research participants self-identifying as gay, transgender and transexual. According to **Shen Tingting, Asia Catalyst’s Advocacy Programme Director**, “Some people do sex work because they need to earn money – they tell us they earn more after they dress as women. But everyone has different motivations.”

Research respondents also stated that a lack of targeted service provision options means that many members of the trans\* sex worker community miss out on access to basic health care and information about HIV and sexual health. Subsequently, the report identified that **in an international context trans\* sex workers are 49 times more likely to contract HIV than the general population and 9 times more vulnerable to HIV than female sex workers**.

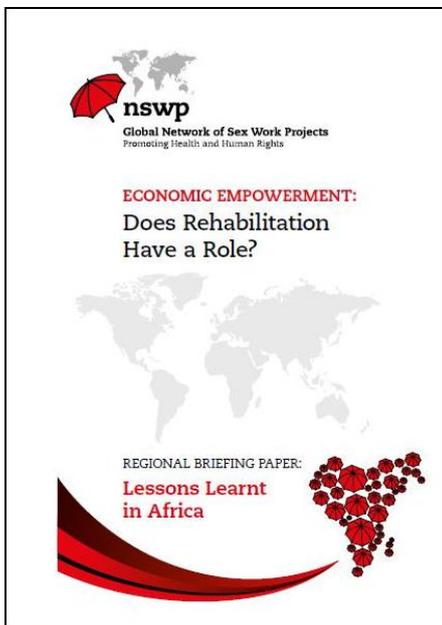
## NSWP publications in various languages

Don’t forget that NSWP translate many of our publications into our other global languages. More recent additions include translations of our briefing papers on the following topics:

An Overview of Access to Medicines; The Voices and Demands of Positive Sex Workers; Sex Work & the Law; and The Needs and Rights of Male Sex Workers. We will also publish the translations of the briefing paper on The Needs and Rights of Trans Sex Workers imminently.

Be sure to check the website for other translations as they become available in *Chinese, French, Spanish and Russian*.

## When Economic Empowerment Programmes Fail Sex Workers



Sex workers are often encouraged to take part in economic empowerment programmes to help them exit sex work by requiring that they give up sex work while they learn new skills like hairdressing and sewing. Some of these programmes work, but the majority of them fail sex workers to such an extent that it is hard to imagine why such programmes are still considered as acceptable by some.

A new briefing paper published by the NSWP - and funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs as part of the '**Stepping Up, Stepping Out Project**' by **Aids Fonds** that aims to support the development of advocacy tools around rights-based economic empowerment for sex workers - asks whether rehabilitation works. This briefing paper is the first of two publications in this part of the project with the objective of documenting the experiences of sex workers and the impact of rehabilitation programmes on sex workers. A regional report documenting good practice in economic empowerment programmes for sex workers will be published soon.

The case studies in the briefing paper document programmes that

did not meaningfully engage or consult with sex workers to establish the right goals and objectives; lacked built-in strategies to support the sustainment of sex workers' new income generating activities; lacked sufficient and on-going training for sex workers once the programmes stopped or when sex workers exited the programme; did not factor in the effects of entrenched stigma and discrimination against sex workers in local communities where sex workers were being "rehabilitated" or "re-integrated" to. In Uganda, for example sex workers who were running small informal businesses were harassed by customers in the communities they worked demanding sex in return for them 'shopping' at their businesses.

The rehabilitation element only served to make sex workers worse off - some had no means of buying the basic necessities for their families when their new small business was not generating an income. Others returned to sex work very soon after completing a programme as their new business was not sustainable.

There are other reasons these types of programmes fail and those reasons often relate to poorly designed and managed programmes that also tend to be under funded. For economic empowerment programmes for sex workers to succeed, sex workers should be at the centre of the design of programmes that purport to want to help them. They should be included in planning and engaged meaningfully when setting the goals and objectives of these programmes. Sex workers know what will and won't work for them. Without adopting a rights-based approach i.e. an approach to delivering economic empowerment programmes that ensure that the rights of sex workers are upheld in every facet of the programme - economic empowerment programmes are doomed to fail with sex workers bearing the brunt of that failure.

**Click here** for a short summary with the main findings and recommendations. You can download the briefing paper **here**.

## Global Fund Updates CCM Guidelines and Requirements for 2015: New opportunities for key population advocacy



**This document** from ICASO provides information and practical guidance for civil society organisations and key population networks on the updated Country Coordinating Mechanism (CCM) Eligibility Requirements which came into effect on January 1, 2015.

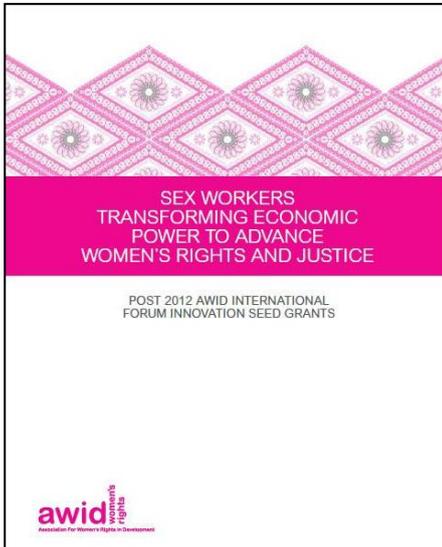
See also this new story:

## Global Fund e-learning library now complete

The Global Fund has now completed its **e-learning library** related to the access to funding process. Courses are available in English, French, Spanish and Russian. These courses have already been viewed over 5500 times, with 100% of survey respondents indicating they would recommend courses to a colleague.

Courses can be viewed on-line or off-line and are available on the Global Fund website **here**.

## Sex Workers Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women's Rights and Justice



This *AWID report* shares highlights and insights from the four recipients of AWID's "Innovation Seed Grants" whose projects focused on advancing the rights of sex workers.

These projects reflect the culmination of a process of engagement and collaboration between AWID and diverse sex worker groups and coalitions around AWID's 2012 International Forum on Women's Rights and Development.

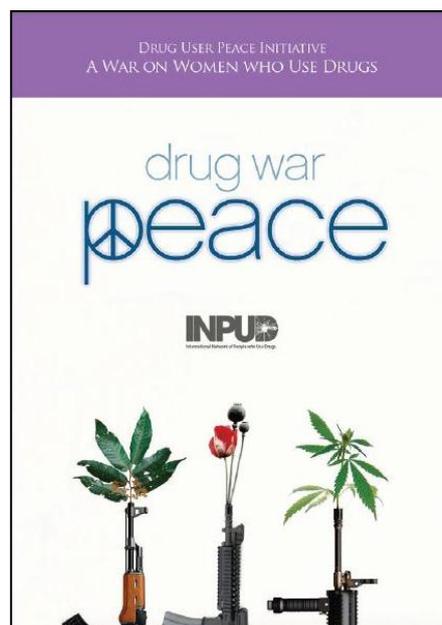
Organised around the theme of Transforming Economic Power to Advance Women's Rights and Justice, the 2012 Forum sought to help participants gain a stronger understanding around economic issues; re-energise participants, especially with regard to their engagement in economic debates; link and connect diverse women's rights advocates, movements and allies; and contribute to forward-looking proposals for transforming economic power. Linked to this last objective, AWID mobilised resources for "Innovation Seed Grants" to support Forum participants to convert some of the creative ideas, solutions, and connections sparked at the Forum into reality. Following the

2012 Forum, AWID was able to award a total of twenty-four USD 5,000 seed grants.

This report tells the stories of the seed grant experiences of the Association of Hungarian Sex Workers (SZEXE), Red Umbrella Project (RedUP), Debolina Dutta in collaboration with sex worker collectives DMSC and VAMP, and Aids Myanmar Association National Network of Sex Work Projects (AMA). The four offer rich insights into how sex workers are transforming economic power to advance women's rights and justice. They also offer useful lessons for funders seeking to support sex worker organising as well as lessons for collaborative organising and engagement between sex workers and other women's rights and feminist activists.

All of the work reflected in this report was either directly led by sex workers or involved their close engagement in shaping the focus and priorities of the work. "Nothing about us, without us" has been a theme throughout this process and the relevance of that organising principle is amply illustrated here. The sex worker project organisers and participants were able to craft and adapt the projects as needed to respond to contextual realities, challenges faced along the way, and shifting needs and priorities.

## Drug User Peace Initiative



INPUD has released this *series of publications* of the Drug User Peace Initiative, each with a specific focus and each contains a handy executive summary and foreword.

The series includes this publication '**War on Women who Use Drugs**' which includes a chapter on Sex Work and Drug Use.



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The Global Network of Sex Work Projects (NSWP) advocates for the health and human rights of sex workers. We work to uphold the voices of sex workers globally and to connect regional networks advocating for the rights of female, male and transgender sex workers.

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