

Working with the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

Empower Foundation Thailand

In 2009 Empower was excited to be invited by the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria to help design a new HIV-prevention programme for female sex workers in Thailand. We were proud to be part of a new initiative to improve sex workers' chances of being safe from HIV. We hoped increased resources would allow us to strengthen the skills and capacities of our leaders and develop our community's knowledge. We also hoped to be able to share the decades of experience and lessons learned from both our successes and failures with non-sex-worker partner organisations, both government and non-government, in Thailand. This new Global Fund HIV Programme for Female Sex Workers was managed by Planned Parenthood Association of Thailand.

Empower is the oldest and strongest sex-worker organisation in Southeast Asia. Our main goal is to promote the human rights of sex workers and provide a space for its community to own, organise and assert their rights to education, health, access to justice and political participation. More than 50,000 sex workers have been part of Empower since it was founded by a group of sex workers and women's rights activists in 1984.

Empower has won the Thai award for Best Human Rights Organisation in 2006, the UNDP Red Ribbon Award in 2008 and the Freedom to Create Prize in 2009. We have been recognised for our expertise in HIV – invited to contribute to National Aids Planning and holding the chair position of the Local Organising Committee for the 2013 Asia-Pacific AIDS Conference. We are frequently contacted for guidance and input by bodies such as UNAIDS, the World Health Organisation, UNDP and UNFPA.

Despite this history of expertise and recognition, we were dropped from the Global Fund project after nearly two years of successful participation.

How the Programme Works

Each of the nine organisations within the project were given the same model to work with. Empower and one other group were the only organisations that had previous experience working with sex workers; the others were new to the field, including the manager, Planned Parenthood. We were supposed to create drop-in centres, run outreach, provide community HIV education and promote counseling and testing for sexually-transmitted infections and HIV among female sex workers. Empower already had well-established drop-in centres for sex workers in five provinces. Under the project we employed 35 sex workers as leaders and opened a further six drop-in centres in new provinces. Sex-worker leaders managed the centres and ran the outreach and other activities. These

leaders recruited a further 300 sex workers as community educators and support people for the project.

Global Fund projects are evaluated every three months, and Empower passed every evaluation between October 2009 and July 2011.

Our Concerns

Throughout we voiced our concerns regarding the Global Fund's policy on HIV testing, which increasingly uses the number of sex workers having voluntary counseling and testing (VCT) to indicate the success of a project. But when participating organisations are afraid they will not meet quotas, this indicator may not reflect true *voluntary* counseling or testing. We know of sex workers who have been coerced or even forced to take the test.

Empower women help Planned Parenthood Thailand employees sent to take back condoms and other equipment from a sex-worker drop-in centre. Photo Empower

赋权基金会的工作人员帮助计划生育协会从个性工作者活动中心取回安全套和其他设备。



We were also critical that there was no provision made for sex workers who test HIV-positive. Since a positive HIV result was seen as the end of *prevention*, not the beginning of treatment, the programme provided these sex workers with no access to treatment or care: they had lost their values as *indicators*.

We think the Global Fund over-emphasises administrative tasks such as record-keeping and written reports, encouraging other participating groups to favour hiring people who have administrative skills as project staff. Sex workers' skills come to be seen as less valuable than those of a bookkeeper, so sex workers are unlikely to be hired as leaders and managers. We saw that sex workers were only hired in the most temporary and lowly-paid roles, if at all, by other participating groups. Stigma and suspicion towards sex workers were also strong at the management level, so sex workers were continually checked up on and forced to prove they had done their work. Many sex workers lost spirit with the whole programme and walked away.

Sex workers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia, 2007, Photo APNSW

柬埔寨金边的性工作者, 2007年



Dropped!

In October 2011 Empower was notified by Planned Parenthood that although we had passed the financial-management evaluation and succeeded with nearly all our indicators, we were being dropped from the programme. Three hundred of our sex-worker outreach workers and 35 sex-worker staff all lost their jobs overnight, and four of our centres were forced to close permanently. The reasons given included:

- Empower had hired 'low quality' staff with 'no qualifications' (meaning sex workers).
- Empower had provided HIV counseling to hundreds of sex workers (well above the required quota for counseling), but too few had gone on to take the HIV test, so we had failed to meet the required quota for testing.
- Empower had failed to 'create harmony' amongst participating groups because we raised concerns about stigma and discrimination in Thai Public Health services (administrator of the Global Fund programme).



What We Learned from this Experience

We would like to offer the Global Fund suggestions for improvements so that sex workers can be supported to be healthy and safe, including from HIV.

- The Global Fund needs to take urgent steps to remove HIV testing as an indicator of project success, because it can be manipulated by coercing participants to take the test.
- The Global Fund needs to ensure that projects will provide continuing access to treatment and care for participating sex workers, not simply diagnosis, so that HIV-positive people are not disqualified.
- The Global Fund needs to develop standards and practices that reflect the value of community and sex worker-led projects rather than prioritising administrative skills.
- The structure and relationships between management and participating groups need urgent review with special attention paid to the balance of power and potential for abuse of power, so that participants are not suddenly dropped without warning.
- A complaints process should be part of Global Fund programming, so that participants can raise problems early and not be suddenly removed without any possibility of negotiation.

We have thought long and hard about what happened to us and hope other groups working on HIV prevention through the Global Fund can learn from our experience.

About the author

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与全球基金合作的经验

泰国赋权基金会

2009年，泰国赋权基金会非常荣幸地接到全球抗击艾滋病、结核和疟疾基金的邀请，帮助设计一个新针对向泰国女性工作者的艾滋病预防项目。能够参与到这个新的项目推动性工作者的艾滋病预防，我们感到很自豪。我们希望，这些增加的资源能够增强社区领袖的能力和知识。我们也希望能够和非性工作者合作方、政府和非政府机构，一同分享我们这几十年来成功和失败。这个面向性工作者的新的全球基金艾滋病预防项目由泰国计划生育协会进行管理。

赋权基金会是东南亚成立时间最早、也是最活跃的性工作者机构。我们的主要目标是促进性工作者的人权，并推动社区来实践、组织和维护自己的教育权、健康权、诉权和政治参与。赋权基金会于1984年由一群性工作者和女性权利活动家成立。迄今为止，已经有5万多名性工作者参与到我们的项目中。

2006年，赋权基金会获得了泰国最佳人权组织奖；2008年获得联合国开发署的红丝带奖，2009年的自由创造奖。我们在艾滋病领域的丰富经验得到了广泛的承认：赋权基金会被邀请参与制定国家艾滋病计划，并在2013年亚太艾滋病大会的地方组织委员会中担任主席一职。一些国际机构经常向我们征询意见，如联合国艾滋病规划署、世界卫生组织、联合国开发署，以及联合国人口基金会。

尽管我们在艾滋病领域有着丰富的知识和经验，也获获得了大家的承认，但在成功参与全球基金项目两年之后，我们被迫退出。

项目的开展

参与这个全球基金项目有9个组织，都按照同样的方式开展工作。赋权基金会和另外一个组织是项目中唯一有性工作者经验的；其他组织都是刚开始涉足性工作领域，包括项目的管理方，计划生育委员会。项目支持我们建立社区服务中心，进行外展，在女性性工作者中开展社区艾滋病教育和推动性传染疾病的检测和咨询。在这个项目开始之前，赋权基金会就已经在五个省建有完善的、面向性工作者的社区服务中心和服务。在全球基金项目的支持下，我们雇佣了35名性工作者作为领导者，并在另外一个省新建了一个活动中心。这些中心由性工作者进行领导和管理，开展外展和其他活动。这些行工作领导者又招募了300名性工作者，作为社区教育员和项目的资源人。

全球基金项目每三个月评估一次，赋权基金会在2009年至2011年7月通过了每一次评估。

我们的担忧

我们对全球基金艾滋病检测的政策感到忧虑，该政策用性工作者进行自愿咨询和检测（VCT）的数量来衡量一个项目的是否成功。由于机构会担心无法完成任务，这些指标就可能无法反映真实的自愿咨询或检测的情况。我们了解到，一些性工作者被迫或被要求去进行检测。

而性工作者被检测出阳性之后，并没有相应的后续服务跟进。对此我们也提出质疑。在这个艾滋病预防项目中，由于检测结果呈阳性被看作是预防工作的结束，而不是治疗的开始，因此这个项目并没有为检测为阳性的性工作者提供治疗或关怀：因为对于预防来讲，他们失去了作为指标的价值。

同时，我们也认为全球基金过分强调行政管理，如保存记录和书面报告，这使得组织倾向于招聘具有管理技能的人作为项目工作人员。而与财务人员相比，性工作者的经验则显得不那么重要，所以性工作者不太可能被雇佣为领导者和管理者。我们看到，性工作者被招聘在那些暂时的、低薪的职位，如果这些项目中有性工作者的话。在管理层中对性工作者的污名和怀疑也是很严重的，所以性工作者不断被检查，被迫证明他们完成了自己的工作。很多性工作者对整个项目失去信心并决定离开。

退出！

2011年10月，赋权基金会按计划生育协会告知，尽管我们通过了财务和管理评估，并几乎完成了所有的指标，但我们仍然要退出该项目。300名性工作外展人员和35个性工作者员工在一夜之间失去了他们的工作，4个活动中心被迫永久关闭。理由包括：

- 赋权基金雇佣了“低质量”的“不够资格”的员工（即性工作者）。
- 赋权基金会为数百名性工作者提供艾滋病咨询（远高于所要求的指标），但只有很少人进行艾滋病检测，所以我们没有完成检测的指标。
- 作为项目参与方，赋权基金会未能“创造和谐”，因为我们提出了泰国公共卫生服务（为全球基金的管理方）中存在的污名和歧视问题。



Planned Parenthood Thailand vehicle loaded with condoms and equipment removed from a sex-worker drop-in centre after Empower was dropped from the programme, Photo Empower

赋权基金会退出项目后，泰国计划生育协会的车从个性工作者活动中心运走安全套和设备

我们从项目当中学到什么

我们希望为全球基金提供建议，改善他们的项目，使性工作者能够获得支持、健康和安全的，免于艾滋病。

- 全球基金需要采取紧急措施撤消将艾滋病检测作为衡量项目的指标，因为这可能会导致强制检测。
- 全球基金需要保证项目能够为性工作者提供持续的治疗和关怀，而不只是诊断，以使艾滋病阳性患者能够获得治疗。
- 全球基金需要制定标准和实践，把社区参与和性工作者主导作为项目的核心价值，而不是强调项目的管理能力。
- 管理方和项目组织之间的架构和关系应当进行重新考量和审视，要特别关注权力的平衡以及可能的权力滥用，避免参与组织在未知情的情况下突然被撤出。
- 应当在全球基金项目中建立投诉机制。让参与机构可以尽早把问题提出来，而不是突然被迫撤出而没有任何谈判的余地。

被迫退出项目之后，我们思考了很久，试图找出原因。我们希望其他从事全球基金艾滋病预防工作的组织可以从我们的经验中有所受益。

关于赋权基金会

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