

# THE MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT OF SEX WORKERS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTH SERVICES AIMED AT THEM

Sex workers have the same right to health as everyone else. However, the field of public health often neglects the health of specific, marginalised populations. Sex workers are often stigmatised as 'vectors of disease'. This approach reinforces discriminatory behaviours of healthcare providers. Sex workers' fundamental right to health is best upheld when sex workers are meaningfully involved in all stages of service provision development.

## SERVICE PROVIDERS AND SERVICE USERS



Most governments, agencies and health providers assume sex workers are exclusively service users and cannot also be health service providers. This dichotomy is based on stereotypes and stigma and does not treat sex workers as equal partners.



## THE KEYS TO MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT:



Sex worker-led organisations choose how they are represented and by whom, and if and how they engage in any process (law reform, policy development or programming).



A transparent and accountable process for consultation and decision making that allows time for genuine consultation within sex worker-led organisations in the country.



Translation and interpretation is provided to sex workers if required during events and activities.



Sex workers choose to participate (or not) in the programme or process.

Sex workers are not only beneficiaries of programmes, but are involved at all levels in the programme and partnerships including:



Board (legal-decision making).



Programme advisory committee.



Monitoring and evaluation committee.

A diverse range of sex workers are engaged - sex workers who:



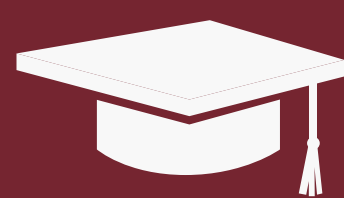
are female, male and transgender.



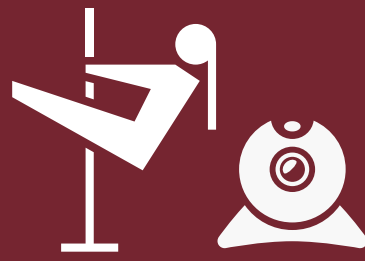
use drugs.



live with HIV.



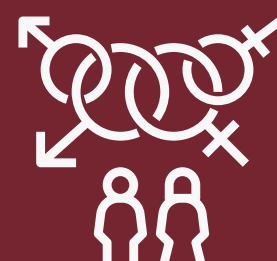
have different education levels.



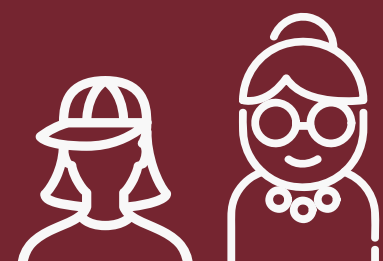
perform various types of sex work.



work in urban and rural settings.



have diverse sexual orientations and gender identities.



are young adults and aging sex workers.



are migrant and mobile sex workers, particularly undocumented sex workers.

## RECOMMENDATIONS:

### • FOR GOVERNMENTS, POLICY MAKERS, AND HEALTH SERVICE PROGRAMMERS:

Decriminalise sex work, HIV transmission and same-sex sexual activity.

Actively reduce stigma.

Recognise sex work as work.

Align funding mechanisms and national policy priorities.

Provide comprehensive health services that are explicitly friendly to sex workers.

Eliminate requirements for identity cards and collection of biometric information.

Support the formation of new sex worker-led organisations and increase the funding and capacity of existing ones.

Healthcare providers should actively build trust and partnerships with sex workers and sex worker-led organisations.

Provide equitable compensation to sex workers who are meaningfully involved in the implementation and management of services

### • FOR SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS ORGANISATIONS:

Increase the capacity of sex workers so they are better equipped to become meaningfully involved. This includes improving their financial capacity, literacy, basic education levels, and knowledge about their rights. Many sex worker organisations are already engaging in these efforts and simply lack the funding to bolster them.

Where possible, prioritise asserting sex workers' right to health. This should be done with both government and non-government organisations. Sex worker-led organisations should try to actively collect data on the violations of their right to health and report and publicise these.

**SEX WORKERS' RIGHTS ARE HUMAN RIGHTS:**  
SEX WORKERS CALL FOR MEANINGFUL INVOLVEMENT IN HEALTH SERVICES AIMED AT SEX WORKERS!

Learn more at:

[www.nswp.org/resource/community-guide-the-meaningful-involvement-sex-workers-the-development-health-services](http://www.nswp.org/resource/community-guide-the-meaningful-involvement-sex-workers-the-development-health-services) or at <http://bit.ly/meaningful-involvement>



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Global Network of Sex Work Projects  
Promoting Health and Human Rights