

Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers

Creating partnerships, Developing networks and Advancing Sex Workers Rights across Asia and the Pacific.



September 30, 2013.

Statement by the Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers on Equality Now's anti-sex work campaign.

The Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW) supports the recommendations contained in the Global Commission on HIV and the Law's report ***HIV and the Law: Risks, Rights and Health*** (December 2012) published by UNDP & the UNDP, UNFPA, UNAIDS report: ***Sex Work and the Law in Asia and the Pacific*** (October 2012), respectively. The former publication was the result of wide consultation with community, civil society and stakeholders globally. We note with interest that Equality Now did not tender a submission to the Commission. The Asia/Pacific report was a collaborative work, that involved member organisations from APNSW working with partners of the UN Joint Programme on HIV/AIDS which led to this report having such important recommendations.

We condemn the campaign by Equality Now against the UN recommendations to decriminalise sex work. At the same time, we unequivocally support NSWP in their rejection of this assault on sex workers and their human rights. This offensive by Equality Now is an attempt to silence sex workers and replace us with handpicked "survivors" to advance the view that all prostitution is "violence against women". At the launch of the Sex Work and the Law in Asia and the Pacific Report, we warned that there was a concerted push to eradicate prostitution worldwide. The evidence shows that if sex workers are empowered to realise their human rights, abuses within the sex industry can be addressed through labour rights and legal recognition.

APNSW categorically rejects Equality Now's push to have the Swedish Model criminalizing clients enacted in this region. We reject the Swedish Model (sometimes called the Nordic Model) because it is de facto criminalisation of sex work. The intent behind this "model" is to eradicate the sex industry worldwide, leaving millions sex workers without a livelihood. We are of the view that sex workers have the right to consent and to have their consent respected. The idea that women's consent can be ignored perpetuates gender inequality. The idea that it is okay to ignore a woman's consent because she is in sex work is puzzling when women have rights based on multiple identities. If women are not allowed to have their consent acknowledged as sex workers, is their consent 'allowed' as migrant women or as workers for example.

Human trafficking as defined in the Palermo Protocol is a crime. Given its seriousness and complexity, it is imperative that anti-trafficking measures actually impact trafficking rather than simply promoting a particular ideology about sex work.

We therefore call on all organisations to oppose this attempt by Equality Now to undermine the rights of sex workers.

Asia Pacific Network of Sex Workers (APNSW)

60/1 Monririn Building, 2nd Floor, Room #A 202, Soi Sailom, Phaholyothin 8, Samsaen Nai, Phayathai, Bangkok 10400 THAILAND
t. +66 2616 6162 f. +66 2616 6162 e. apnswbkk@gmail.com w. <http://sexwork.asia>