

WHO REPORT

Expert workgroup meeting for the development of a toolkit for HIV/AIDS prevention and care interventions in sex work settings

Geneva, December 8-9, 2003

Background

Since the first half of 2003, Mrs. Manoela Moeller, from the Prevention Unit of WHO, has been contacting NSWP, asking for publications and other materials from sex workers' organizations throughout the world. In October she contacted the co-coordinator, checking availability to a meeting in December. She also asked to nominate "a sex worker from Asia" (they still do it! When will they recognize that we are organized all over the world?!!). I told about the APNSW and nominated Tini, who is also the chair of the board of NSWP; WHO accepted the nomination. The meeting, named "expert workgroup meeting" was organized for 8 and 9 Dec. at WHO headquarters, in Geneva. Before that, a small meeting happened at the Alliance Headquarters in Brighton, where several inputs from Cheryl Overs and Alliance staff were considered.

Participants

From sex workers' organizations we also had Licia Brussa, from Tampep. The others were people that use to work with sex workers in different contexts, including research (such as the new NSWP board member Chris Castle) and some WHO staff members. UNAIDS was invited but didn't send a representative. The local sex workers organization from Geneva, ASPASIE, was also invited but also did not send a representative. It had a total of 12 participants and Dr. Isabelle de Zoysa, HIV Prevention Unit chief, did the opening.

Background documents

WHO sent by e-mail a list of the publications to be considered to be included at the toolkit. It was basically a "matrix", with a list of 47 pages and 119 articles, books, reports and abstracts. A quick review gave an idea that a lot of effort in the 100% Condon Use Program (My God!, again!!), a model promoted by WHO in Asia/Pacific that NSWP is strongly against. A file holder with the list of participants, agenda, aims of the meeting and other background documents was distributed to the participants (basically on ARV and the WHO prevention strategies).

The dynamics...

Some presentations were done, including an elucidative opening speech from Dr. Isabelle de Zoysa, a presentation on the "Brief on structure and layout of the draft HIV/SW toolkit", by Manoela Moeler and on "Guiding principles", by Catrin Evans, from the University of Nottingham, a consultant hired by WHO to write the toolkit. Some participants, including NSWP members P. Longo and Tini Slamah served as facilitators.

The afternoon of the first day and the whole morning of the second were dedicated to group activities. Based on the guiding principles, some major themes were identified: Assessment; Planning and Community Involvement; Intervention Design and Implementation; Monitoring and Evaluation. The tasks of each group were to identify the most important issues regarding these themes and present them to the whole group afterwards. The last afternoon was dedicated to identify gaps and to discuss next steps.

For us, sex workers, the major achievement of this meeting was to have the opportunity to raise our voices and to make sure that we are heard once more (we NEVER lose our hope, keep on trying!). Some of NSWP publications, such as Making Sex Work Safe, were considered key materials. We also had the opportunity to discuss with Catrin Evans our opinion on the 100% Condom Use Programs that clearly WHO wanted to spread with the toolkit. We forwarded some of the documentation we have from the perspective of sex workers. Before we left, we made very clear that we would wait for the drafts to be forwarded to the whole group for review and comments.