



Sexual Rights e-News

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March 2009

Decriminalise sex work

African sex workers and organisations working with sex workers in Africa joined forces to call for the decriminalisation of sex work, respect for sex workers rights and an end to impunity for perpetrators of violence against sex workers.

This call was made by over 200 delegates who attended the first African sex workers 2009 Conference in February. The conference held in Johannesburg sort to create an Alliance that advocated for sex workers' rights. The main themes to be addressed are decriminalisation of adult sex work, documentation, monitoring and reporting human rights violations, recognition of sex work as work, free and friendly universal access to health care, building solidarity and mobilising sex workers and building the alliance ensuring

participation, representation and leadership of sex workers at all levels within the Alliance.

During the conference, delegates from countries such as South Africa, Zambia, Uganda, Kenya, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Nigeria deliberated on issues ranging from change in legislation, to accommodation and safe housing, to police harassment, to the behaviour of clients, to 2010 and the alliance.

In her presentation during the conference, the Director for the Sexual Rights Centre talked about the different human rights violations that sex workers in Zimbabwe experience. "Sex work is a crime in Zimbabwe.

However, for many sex workers in Zimbabwe one of the main problems are minor pieces of legislation that are manipulated by the police and lead to

many rights violations against sex workers that go unnoticed, unreported and undocumented. This legislation is misogynistic and discriminatory," she said

Sex workers working with the Sexual Rights Centre said they are frequently arrested and illegally detained. They are forced to have sex with police officers to secure their release. Many NGOs in Zimbabwe view commercial sex work as a social and moral ill that must be addressed and abolished. This perspective increases stigmas and reduces commercial sex workers' access to facilities, information and resources.

The Sexual Rights Centre is the only organisation in Zimbabwe with a programme dedicated to working with commercial sex workers to advocate for their rights. ■

SRC builds networks regionally

The Sexual Rights Centre had an opportunity to network, build alliances and learn from over 2,000 women rights leaders and activists during the historic three-day Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) International Forum on Women's Rights and Development that was held in Cape Town, South Africa in November 2008.

The theme for the AWID Forum was "The Power of Movements".

The Forum presented learning opportunities and gave the SRC a platform to share its work with other organisations, donors and activists. During the Forum the SRC participated in interactive sessions focusing on creative thinking on gender equality, women's human rights including the

rights of LGBTI. The Director also attended the launch of the report Rights Not Rescue: A Report on Female, Trans, and Male Sex Workers' Human Rights in Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa (produced by OSI) about the experiences of sex workers in the Southern Africa region. This report has provided an important foundation for the development of SRC programmes on sex workers. The Director was sponsored by OSI to attend the forum. This was an exciting opportunity and learning curve. The AWID Forum is the largest women's convening outside of the UN, and takes place every three years. The 2008 conference was building on last conference title "How does change happen?" held in Bangkok, Thailand.



Networking and sharing experiences



Celebrating women's achievements

Women and Men United to End Violence

The International Women's Day, on the 8th of March, is marked by a variety of activities such as information fairs, conferences, round table discussions and exhibitions. Since 1911, the international community has been joining

hands to celebrate the achievements of women in the economic, political and social arena. The Sexual Rights Centre in partnership with many women's organisations in Bulawayo commemorated International Women's Day with a festival.

This year's global theme for the International Women's Day was "Women and men united to end violence against women and girls". Women, men and children were all invited to attend and participate in this free festival. The event was held at the Small City Hall on the 7th of March starting with a march through the city centre. The day was a

celebration of women's achievements with theatre performances, song, dance, music and poetry performed by Bamblela Arts Ensemble, Bambatha Community Actors' Centre,

Inziki and Simunye Simunye Arts. Seven women from Bulawayo were honoured for their outstanding contributions towards the cause of women. These were Betty Chiwambo, Ivy Ndlovu Sibanda, Elizabeth Sibanda, Netty Mutavayi, Sithandazile Dube, Essie Mtungwa and Sizalobuhle Ncube.

The ONANDI Women's Festival, is a local initiative hosted annually to mark the International Women's Day. This is the only women's festival in Zimbabwe. It is an opportunity to celebrate womanhood, women's rights, women's health and women achievements in Zimbabwe. The ONANDI Women's Festival is aimed at giving men and women in Bulawayo a chance to take stock, reflect, think ahead and move forward in promoting women's human rights. The ONANDI Women's Festival is also an opportunity to unite, network and mobilise for meaningful change in upholding women's rights. ■

"Women's Rights are Human Rights"

We would like to thank Sue Jenner of Bristol, UK for her kind and generous donation to the work of the Sexual Rights Centre. We are very grateful for her support.

