



MEDIA RELEASE

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A new website launched on the International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers

December 17 is International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers. The Paulo Longo Research Initiative (PLRI) marks this important day with the launch of its new website, www.plri.org.

The PLRI is an alliance formed by sex workers, researchers and human rights advocates to generate and consolidate research about sex work, analyse policy and strategically communicate findings of evidence for policies and programmes that improve the lives of male female and transgender sex workers. Grounded in the perspectives of the global sex workers rights movement, PLRI is committed to meaningful participation of sex workers and all our work involves sex workers. PLRI core partners are the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) UK, Global Network of Sex Work Projects, Monash University, Australia and the Centre for Advocacy on Stigma and Marginalisation (CASAM), India.

The PLRI website is a substantial library of resources about sex work in the context of economics, law, health, gender and sexuality, and migration. As it grows the site will increasingly showcase important research findings, host discussions among academics and sex workers and provide text and video news about relevant events and publications. The site will provide health service providers, policy makers, social workers, human rights advocates and students invaluable opportunities to learn about issues that affect sex workers.

December 17 provides an opportunity to reflect on why research is needed to provide evidence to guide measures to protect sex workers from violence and exploitation. Sex workers from all over the world have long argued that criminal laws against sex work render them vulnerable to abuses, including unprotected sex and lack of access to services and justice. But many countries continue to criminalise sex workers and sex worker organisations everywhere receive frequent reports of violence.

Sex workers all over the world are subject to violence, exploitation and abuse. For example:

- USAID research conducted in 2006 in Cambodia found that of the female and transgender sex workers surveyed approximately half were beaten by police; about a third gang-raped by police and about three-quarters were gang-raped by other men during the past year.

- In Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa Jane Arnott and Anna Louise found that repeated violence, extortion and detention by law enforcement officers leave sex workers feeling constantly under threat in a climate of impunity that fosters further violence and discrimination against sex workers from the community-at-large. Migrants and transgender sex workers are particularly affected.
- In Pakistan research into sexually transmitted infections by the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine found that HIV services need to be tied in with efforts to reduce discrimination, exploitation and violence against sex workers if they are going to be effective. This includes support programmes designed to increase sex workers' abilities to defend their own human rights.

The World Health Organisation has recognised clear links between violence and sex workers' vulnerability to HIV and recently both Ban Ki Moon, UN Secretary-General, and Michel Sidibé, UNAIDS Executive Director, have recommended that laws that punish sex workers be repealed in the light of evidence that they increase HIV vulnerability.

On December 17 sex worker organisations in dozens of countries demand an end to violence. Browse the PLRI website to read about the nature and causes of violence against male, female and transgender sex workers and the successes and failures of efforts to reduce it.

NOTES:

- The Institute of Development Studies (IDS), University of Sussex, UK
<http://ids.ac.uk>
- The Department of Epidemiology and Preventive Medicine of Monash University Medical School, Australia <http://www.med.monash.edu.au/epidemiology>
- The Global Network of Sex Work Projects, UK <http://www.nswp.org>
- Centre for Advocacy on Stigma and Marginalisation (CASAM), India
<http://www.sangram.org/advocacy.htm>
- PLRI members are available for interview in the Australia, India and the UK. To request an interview or further information please contact:

Cheryl Overs (Australia)	cheryl.overs@med.monash.edu.au
Kate Hawkins (UK)	k.hawkins@ids.ac.uk
Meena Seshu (India)	meenaseshu@yahoo.com

- Further reading:

Violence and exposure to HIV among sex workers in Phnom Penh, Cambodia
Authors: C. Jenkins Publisher: USA Agency for International Development, 2006
www.eldis.org/go/topics/resource-guides/hiv-and-aids&id=44836&type=Document

Rights Not Rescue: Female, Male, and Trans Sex Workers' Human Rights in Botswana, Namibia, and South Africa
Authors: J Arnott and A-L Crago Publisher: Open Society Institute
www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/sharp/articles_publications/publications/rights_20090626/rightsnotrescue_20090706.pdf

Confronting the HIV challenge in Pakistan: How human rights abuses are fuelling HIV risk

Authors: Programme for Research and Capacity Building in Sexual and Reproductive Health and HIV in Developing Countries Publisher: London School of Hygiene & Tropical Medicine

http://srvhiv.lshtm.ac.uk/PolicyBrief2_Pakistan.pdf

Violence against sex workers and HIV prevention

Authors: World Health Organisation Publisher: World Health Organisation and the Global Coalition on Women and AIDS

<http://www.who.int/gender/documents/sexworkers.pdf>

Sex work, violence and HIV: A guide for programmes working with sex workers

Authors: M Greenall Publisher: International HIV/AIDS Alliance

http://www.aidsalliance.org/includes/Publication/Sex_%20work_violence_and_HIV.pdf